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THE GREEN DRAGON

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I.

I AM sure you know Steeplands as well as I do, only, perhaps, by another name. It is where the mountains of the Hudson Highlands have seated themselves in lazy rest, their heads bent, their feet bathed by the river, and their broad laps offered for farmland and village to the inhabitants of this loveliest of valleys.

I am one of the inhabitants, and I own many an acre of lawn and garden and hothouse and farmland beyond, all left to me by my husband, Tom Eliot, who died three years before this story opens, and is buried in the little graveyard behind the church on the knoll.

I have plenty of grand neighbors, people who have houses at Newport and who come bustling to their river places for six weeks in the spring and autumn, with saucy town servants who have no respect for our dear old villagers; but I make Steeplands my home except during the month of November, when I always pay a visit to my only relation in town and replenish my wardrobe against the approaching cold of the season at Rookswood. Tom left the place to me, and it is a matter of duty with me to see that it is taken care of as he would have liked.

To make a confidence at the very outset, I must explain that Tom always gave, expecting no return,—love for friendship—admiration for mild regard,—and now that he has gone I am still offering duty instead of passionate regret.

It was in this sacrificial frame of mind that I started out on All Saints' Day morning to cover my husband's grave with flowers. Old Allen, the Scotch gardener, followed, carrying two great baskets of golden-headed chrysanthemums, the flowers of Tom's special pride.

We had hardly finished our task in the churchyard before the sur-

pliced choir (little devils from the shanties about the railway station transmogrified into angels by their white gowns and hanging sleeves) came from the side door of the Sunday-school room and, eschewing the covered passage which led into the church, wound their way along the paths between the graves to the great west door. As they marched they sang some cherub hymn which ended in "Alleluia!" and as they faced the mountain behind the church the echo gave back the word.

I stood listening, my arms clasping the left-over flowers, my soul thrilled by the sensuous setting to this festival of the dead—all sunshine and high-set music. No dark church for me with its monotonous service. My pagan soul had received an impression, sharp and strong; I would carry it away with me through the soft November morning, through the dying glories of the trees and the haze of the atmosphere.

I had accomplished perhaps a quarter of a mile on my return tramp when I heard the clanging of a bell behind me, immediately followed by the thud of horses' feet advancing at a wild gallop, and then by shrill feminine screams blood-curdling in their terror. With a bound I reached the side of the road just as old Mrs. Tobin's carriage came reeling past, the coachman hatless and purple in the face through his frenzied efforts to check the frightened horses, and the old lady thrusting her head first out of one window and then the other in impartial distribution of her shrieks for help.

Meanwhile the cause of the commotion was slowly approaching at so moderate a pace that I could not but think Mrs. Tobin's horses were in search of a lark and took this opportunity to teach the old lady not to let her midday airing encroach upon their dinner-hour. It was an automobile of the French racing pattern, painted a lively green, with brass trimmings, and driven by a gentleman whose face was half concealed by goggles set in a mask of black silk. I have since heard that these goggles are much the mode among amateur chaffeurs and can be procured anywhere for the sum of eight dollars, but on that eventful day I thought they guarded the features of a twentieth-century Dick Turpin, and as the vehicle drew up beside me I quickly turned the stones of my rings towards my palms, for I had removed my gloves to facilitate my work in the churchyard and had never replaced them.

A charming voice addressed me, and the highwayman—a towering, great creature—stood, hat in hand, looking down at me through the goggles.

"You saw the runaway?" he began. "Would you be so kind as to give me the name of the owner of the carriage? I wish to make my apologies at causing such an unfortunate accident and to offer to furnish the lady's coachman with a new hat," and he pointed to a shapeless black object in the road which had just received its coup-de-grâce from the wheels of his carriage.

"You had better furnish old Mrs. Tobin with a set of new wits while you are about it," I answered saucily, "for you have frightened her well out of the few she possessed."

"Perhaps you would undertake that part of the commission for me," he suggested, with a tinge of impertinence in his tone. "They seem to grow under the shelter of feathers and lace rather than behind the counter of Dunlap's hat shop."

I felt I had brought this familiarity upon myself, but for that very reason I resented it the more.

"The lady's name," I said with dignity, "is Mrs. Tobin. She lives a mile from here in a place overlooking the river. You will recognize her gateway by a pair of Sphinxes guarding the entrance. I presume she is not injured, for I can see the carriage now mounting the hill in the distance, and the speed seems slow enough to reassure the most timid."

My manner was both reserved and gently condescending, and it had the desired effect. The next remark addressed to me was deferential.

"May I once more trespass upon your kindness and ask to be directed to Sans Gêne—Mr. Bird's place, you know?"

I gave the desired information, and he turned away murmuring something about writing to Mrs. Tobin, as her horses might object to a second encounter.

I was so entranced watching the effect of a carefully waxed mustache and very white teeth showing below the hideous disguise that I could hardly return the magnificent bow he made me by way of farewell. He sprang into his auto, and as he turned on the power the machine bounded ahead like a living dragon, leaving a trail of smoke and foul smell behind it which did much to enforce the impression.

It was not till he was far beyond recall that I remembered there was a culvert in process of construction across the road near my gate. Would the feeble barricade the workmen had put up as a guard be sufficient to attract his attention if he came tearing round the curve in my road at his present speed? I caught my breath and began to run. As well try to chase an ocean steamer in a rowboat! What headway could a pair of feminine legs make in overtaking a flying dragon with a fiery tail!

At the end of twenty minutes I reached the beginning of my privet hedge, and in five more the turn in the road revealed the trench, and there, turned over on its side, smashed, dirty, fireless, lay the green dragon!

What had become of the owner of the amazing toy and where were the workmen? The question was soon answered, for out of my entrance

gate the men streamed, talking volubly of the accident and of the gentleman they had just carried across the lawn to the shelter of my house.

I stopped the foreman and elicited some particulars. The automobile had come flying down the hill and round the turn in the road before the men could stop it and, crashing into the trench, had turned a complete somersault, landing on its side. The gentleman in goggles seemed very much injured, but his man, who had been thrown out on the soft turf, was not at all hurt. I rushed on over grass and flowerbeds till I reached the piazza and then paused. Physical injury had always been peculiarly repulsive to me. I had to fight a battle with my nerves before I could turn the handle of the front door.

Rookwood is built in a crescent facing west and overlooking the river. A hall cuts the house in two, the northern half containing the drawing-room, dining-room, and kitchens beyond; the southern half a billiard-room, library, and bachelor's quarters, consisting of a bedroom and bath. It was there that I naturally expected to find my injured guest. But no—as I entered the house I found he had been deposited on the yellow damask of my drawing-room divan. I never sit on that divan now; it gives me a little shiver.

My servants were clustered in the hall, eager to be of service and yet afraid to intrude, for, in spite of his sufferings, the gentleman was dictating telegrams to his own man.

Catching sight of me, the man stood up and mentioned my presence to his master. I heard him say,—

"The lady, sir—Mrs. Eliot." Then, taking a step towards me, he asked, "Will you speak to Mr. Sinclair, Ma'am."

I came to the side of the divan and could have knelt through pity, he looked so wan and spent, and yet excited, as if braced to the limit of his endurance. His goggles had been lost in the crash, and for the first time I saw his face. He was beautiful in the short-nosed Greek type, the brow straight and finely modelled, the lips curved and rather full, while the line of the chin and jaw was almost perfect in its turn. He may have been thirty, but he looked younger. He seemed to me like some high-strung child meeting pain for the first time. "Somebody's spoilt darling," I thought, "capable of better things than he himself knows."

"I am sorry to be such a nuisance," he began, "to give so much trouble to a stranger—" Then as I faced the light he recognized me. "The lady of the wits," he said, smiling faintly. "I could wish you had lent me enough to keep me out of your ditch."

"I should have warned you," I said penitently. "I shall never forgive myself. What can I do to make you more comfortable?"

"You might give me some brandy," he suggested, "and then go away and give me a chance to vent my bad humor at Flinders here,"

and he smiled almost affectionately up at his servant, who was gently pushing a pillow under his wounded arm.

I saw the effort at control was taxing him to the utmost, for even as he spoke he grew deadly white, and I ran myself for the brandy.

I liked his manner to Flinders; it was the familiarity of the gentleman, not the parvenu, and it was plain to see that Flinders bore him a doglike devotion.

My servants had sent for the doctor before Mr. Sinclair had fairly reached the house, and his gig was even now drawing up at the door. I sent Jane, my old nurse, who still ruled me, to wait upon him, and withdrew to the upper floor. I fancied Doctor Gale would despise my services.

Never did so valiant a spirit live in so short a body as Jane's. She respected no one but her Creator, and little that He had made.

I never knew how Mr. Sinclair was moved from the drawing-room to the south bedroom, but I fancy by some strange power generated from Jane's *contradictionness* and Doctor Gale's energy; at any rate, at the end of half an hour Jane joined me.

"That gentleman will be spending the most of the winter here," she opined in a fateful voice, "or I *do be* entirely mistaken."

When Jane says "*I do be*" I know *she is*.

"What do you mean?" I asked fretfully.

"The man's broken his *hinchbone*," she explained, "and that's no flighty matter, let alone a sprained thumb and a dislocated wrist—but the *hinchbone's* the worst!"

"What is a *hinchbone*?" I asked stupidly, for the word did really explain itself.

"Sure, it's the hinge in his hip, what else could it be?" she said with scorn. "Sez I to the Doctor, 'Will it knit?' sez I. 'Twill, *in time*,' sez he. 'What time?' sez I. 'Barrin' nothin' onfavorable,' sez he, 'two months ought to do it, provided you lave him flat on his back with pound weights hung from the leg of him.' 'Doctor, dear,' sez I, 'we're goin' to New York to-morrow for sure; don't you see Mrs. Eliot's trunks packed and standin'? We only waited over All Saints' Day out of compliment to him that's gone, and the second of November has seen us in town these three years.' 'Well, it won't see you there this year,' sez he, right up to my face like that, 'so make me compliments to Mrs. Eliot and ask her to let me talk to her.'"

"How absurd!" I murmured under my breath. "Am I to turn my house into an infirmary for a stranger I never saw before, and then stay to see that he is made comfortable?"

I went downstairs to the Doctor in a mutinous frame of mind. What that man has been to me only those who have shared his ministrations can guess. He has been physician, friend, almost a father, and I love him!

"Well, Ladybird," he began, "you who know the Scriptures may have read of digging a pit for others and falling into the midst of it yourself. It seems to me that this accident has landed you in something of a hole. You have nearly killed a man, and now you can nurse him back to life."

"I nurse him!" I said loftily. "I will lend him my house, and his own people can take possession of him and it."

The Doctor shook his head.

"His people are abroad, his servant tells me, and Mrs. Sinclair is a great invalid. He seems to think the news of this accident will be a dangerous shock to her."

"Then he and his nurses can take possession," I persisted. "I will leave him my servants."

"How long would they behave with no head to rule them?" he asked impatiently. "No, Ladybird, here you stay to help repair the injury your carelessness has done to a fellow-creature."

I felt the color creeping into my cheeks, for I wished to present a personal point of view.

"I am a lonely woman," I began, "and young. Is it not, to say the least, unconventional to shut myself up for two months with a strange man? Would you like Lauretta to do it?"

He burst into a loud roar, partly scorn, partly laughter.

"Good God, child! What freak could have supplied your imagination with such a conjunction of ideas as Lauretta and a responsibility? Lauretta!" he went on with an angry splutter; "I wouldn't trust her with a sick cat. I do not know much about the usages of society—perhaps you may be criticised, but I thought a widow was a law to herself."

"Not when she is under the thumb of an autocratic old despot," I said crossly, knowing I had to yield and firing a last shot. "Give me my instructions," I added meekly.

"I have telephoned to town for McTorture, and he will be here by five o'clock with a nurse, and then together we will try to mend our broken gentleman. Put your dinner at seven, will you? and I will drive McTorture back to the station at eight. Now I must leave you. I have given Mr. Sinclair an opiate, and I wish you would sit with him and give him this second dose if he should wake."

"Can't his man sit with him?" I began.

"I've sent him to the village for the things I shall need from the apothecary," he answered shortly, and left me without another word.

Jane and the Doctor had managed to give my guest an appearance of comfort, though I knew the opiate only stood between him and misery. He was lying very flat on his narrow brass bed, covered warmly with blankets.

I had caught up some knitting, and I now sat beside him mechanically making my monotonous rows. His beauty was so remarkable that I found myself studying his face as I would some statue.

He moved uneasily and suddenly spoke.

"Did Flinders take those telegrams?" he asked in a faint voice, and then I lost two or three words and caught the end of the sentence, which was something about hating to have her see it first in the papers.

"You want Mrs. Sinclair to get your despatch about your accident before the reporters get hold of the news?"

He nodded and sighed.

"You would like her to be here now taking care of you?" I asked gently.

"It would make her happier," he answered.

"May I send her word that we are doing our best to supply her place?"

I fancied he might be grieving for this absent wife as Tom would have grieved for me if he had been lying helpless with the ocean between us. But Mr. Sinclair did not like the suggestion. He shook his head.

"You would frighten her," he said, and shut his eyes as if to end the conversation.

In a few minutes he opened them again.

"May I have a drink of water?" he asked submissively, like a little child.

I brought it, and slipping my hand under his head raised it enough to let him drink.

"Mrs. Sinclair could not have done better than that, could she?" I said cheerfully.

"She would have wiped my mouth," and his eyes smiled as he noted the omission.

I hastened to do as *she* would have done, but got no second smile; the last opiate was doing its work—he was drowsy.

As the clock struck five Doctor Gale's old surrey drew up at the door with the great man and a middle-aged nurse. Their requirements were few and easily supplied, and Jane was a skilful assistant in a sickroom. There was nothing for me to do and I felt the house oppressive. Throwing on my jacket and hat, I was about to fly out of the front door when Doctor Gale crossed the hall.

"That's right, Ladybird. Go and get some color in those pale cheeks. Surgery doesn't furnish pretty thoughts for ladies."

The word sounded ominous.

"Is it a very bad fracture? Do you have to hurt him?" I asked, growing faint, while the enormity of my workmen's sins paralyzed me.

"I do not know yet," he answered. "Perhaps there are complications beyond the ken of an old country doctor. Don't ask so many questions, Ladybird."

"You could have attended to him perfectly well yourself," I said rebelliously. "You are the cleverest and wisest man in the world. The only bright spot in this awful business was that it would have put some money in your pocket, and now you go and toss most of it into McTorture's well-stuffed grab-all! Catch me limning patients for you again."

"Don't joke, Ladybird. Take a long walk," and he pushed me out of the door and shut it gently.

Outside the west was all aglow with the reds of the setting sun. The river looked cold and purple, and the hills of the opposite side cut a sharp outline against the sky. It set my overwrought nerves shivering, this autumnal hardness in the coming night, and I turned my back on the river and walked down the avenue to the public road.

The automobile was righted and in process of being dragged to the lower stable by a pair of my farmhorses. Poor dragon, such an ignominious mode of progression for a thing of its fiery nature! The laborers had nearly filled in the trench and had hung little red lanterns across the part still unfinished. They were careful enough now that the mischief was done.

II.

I HARDLY knew where to walk at such a late hour, and finally decided I would go to Mrs. Tobin's and ask about the runaway. The place was next to mine and stood, from the Sphinxes on the gateposts to the footstools in the drawing-room, exactly as it was the day when the late Mr. Tobin led his Mathilda, a bride, to her home. A velvet carpet with a huge medallion in the centre covered the parlor floor, the furniture was upholstered in hard, bright blue reps, the tables were all marble-topped, and the walls had many mirrors in rosewood frames. From the chimney-breast Mr. Tobin, in a low collar and frock coat, glanced sourly down from his gilt frame on Mrs. Tobin and Lauretta sipping their tea beside the fire.

"I declare, my hands are trembling yet, Lauretta!" Mrs. Tobin was saying as the servant threw open the door of the drawing-room.

"Poor Mrs. Tobin!" I exclaimed. "What a fright you had!"

She groaned fretfully and rolled up her eyes.

"I saw you on the road," she complained. "You did not trouble yourself to make any effort to stop the horses, did you, Susan?"

This was too much. I was almost too cross to take the chair Lauretta wheeled for me close to her aunt.

"I almost stopped them with my dead body," I said. "Didn't you know you nearly ran over me?"

"I should think at least you might have picked up Thomas's hat before the wheels of that dreadful machine crushed it," she grumbled.

I assumed the task of peacemaker on behalf of my guest.

"The owner of the automobile stopped and spoke to me. He asked your address and expressed his regrets, and hoped he might be allowed to make good any damage resulting from the incident. He did not pursue you here for fear of frightening your horses again."

"I should think not!" she said with a sniff. "There ought to be a law passed prohibiting wild-cat locomotives on country roads. If a few accidents could happen to *them* instead of to ladies like you and I driving in our own carriages, it might abate the nuisance."

(Mrs. Tobin considered herself a purist in eschewing the pronoun *me*.)

"He has met his fate," I answered, with a lump in my throat as I thought of the helpless figure in my spare room. "His automobile was overturned in the road just beyond here and he was awfully hurt."

"Was he?" she said indifferently. "Between you and I, I think it served him right. Lauretta, ring for more cream. I don't see how you can take so much in your tea, Susan."

Lauretta crossed the room to pull the handle of the old-fashioned bell—no electric conveniences had invaded Tobin Towers. I glanced at her smart little figure and rosy face with something like envy. She was so entirely absorbed in herself, so healthy and young and tactless.

"Aunt Tilly was saying, Susan, that you were hardly neighborly to let the whole day pass without coming to ask about her."

I accepted the reproach in silence. I should not tell these selfish creatures of my share in the accident; let them find out for themselves. It seemed impossible to believe that my dear Doctor Gale, all intelligence and sympathy and skill, was the own brother of this stupid old yellow pussy-cat, sitting hunched by the fire, her five Assyrian curls thatching her receding forehead, and the bald spot on the top of her head only half-concealed by a braid of reddish hair.

"We haven't seen Uncle Doctor all day," said Lauretta as if in answer to my thoughts, only that I knew no subtle transfer of impressions could ever register in her material brain. "I went down to his house," she continued, "but Mrs. Wilcox was very non-committal as to where he was. I do hate housekeepers. They are not servants and they are not ladies, and you don't know how to treat them, and they certainly don't know how to treat you." And Lauretta shrugged her plump shoulders.

"He is taking care of the gentleman who was injured in the automobile," I confessed, fearing the anxiety might be real.

She looked puzzled for a moment and then said, "Oh!"

I thought of a funny old picture in one of the stained-glass windows of the village church—the Good Samaritan pouring a gushing stream of oil and wine all over a prostrate figure, while a red-frocked Levite, with his shape nicely defined by the high lights, is stamping off on the

other side. Lauretta's red house frock was equally defining. I wondered whether she fancied her uncle setting our wounded traveller-to-Jericho on his own beast and taking him home, or whether she pictured the poor creature still lying by the roadside under the November stars. Certainly she asked no questions, and she was the lady of all others who could ply them when the subject interested her. A look of animation flashed into her face.

"Have you heard," she began, "that the Birds are giving an enormous house party? They came up from town yesterday in the same train with Aunt Tilly and me."

"I, Lauretta," murmured Mrs. Tobin, "always say I."

"We had just been down for the day, you know. They had the Pryce girls and the Vanderveres and Mr. and Mrs. Reggy Forsythe—of all people for a house party; they are so in love with each other they can't look at anybody else—and Dicky Remsen and Charlie Johnstone and I forget who all, but they were behaving disgracefully. They bought packages of Huyler's candy and pelted each other with it, and Dicky got a glass of water and swore he would pour it over Bessie Pryce's feathers if she hit him again, and Mrs. Bird stole Charlie's stick and tripped up the train peddler with it just when he was staggering through the aisle with all the magazines, so that they flew in all directions. Charlie was awfully angry and told Mrs. Bird he was ashamed to be seen with them, but she only laughed. She may have been miffed though, for she did something awfully strange afterwards. You see, Aunt Tilly likes Charlie Johnstone's mother—they are old friends—and she wants me to see something of Charlie," and Lauretta dropped her eyes and looked conscious, "so as we were leaving the train she spoke to him."

"I just said," put in Mrs. Tobin, "that I hoped he would give Lauretta and I the pleasure of his company at dinner this evening, and I was going to ask the Rector and you, Susan."

"Well," resumed Lauretta, "he said he could not very well accept a dinner invitation when he was staying with Mrs. Bird, as he believed she had something going on every evening. Mrs. Bird was just behind him in the aisle of the car, and she called to Aunt Tilly, 'I'll give him up to you, Mrs. Tobin; did you say eight to-morrow evening? I'll see that he's punctual!' and I heard her say to him, 'That's one on you, my boy! Perhaps you won't try any more little games of keeping me in order.'"

"What did he say to that?" I asked, not knowing how much Lauretta understood of the insult to herself and Aunt Tilly.

"He said, 'Well, of all low-down tricks——' and then the train stopped and I could not hear the end of the sentence, but this morning we got a note from Mrs. Bird saying when she promised to give up Mr.

Johnstone she had forgotten he had a cold and had been ordered to stay in the house. Wasn't it horrid in her to try to give him more cold just in revenge and then pretend she had forgotten?"

"That was the explanation, was it?" I said, rising to go, while Mrs. Tobin bustled out of the room to fetch a book I had lent her and which she politely proposed returning to me by myself.

I tucked the recovered volume under my arm and plunged out into the night. As I called "good-by" to Laretta, who was standing at the open door, I thought I saw a figure bound from the piazza to the lawn, but evidently she did not notice it, so I concluded it was the great Dane that they kept as a watch-dog.

"I'll leave the front door open till you get round the turn in the road," shouted Laretta, who was always afraid of the dark.

I knew I heard a step on the other side of the hedge keeping pace with me and my heart beat fast, but I was ashamed to turn back. As I reached the turn in the road a low voice called, "Mrs. Eliot," and Charlie Johnstone made a capital spring over the hedge and landed at my side.

"What a time you have been," he began reproachfully. "I followed you here an hour ago, and I thought you never would come out."

"If you had had the manners to come in," I retorted, "I might have made my visit shorter."

"I go in!" he repeated. "Would you have me stultify myself? I am confined to the house with a cold."

"Oh! are you?" I said. "You are doing your best to turn the fib into reality, waiting in the chill evening air for an hour in that thin coat."

"You know I would do the same if the thermometer were zero for the pleasure of seeing you alone," he answered sentimentally. "Won't you be a little nice, just this once?"

"My dear boy," I answered, "please don't make love to me this evening. I am awfully low in my mind, and it's quite an effort to refuse you more than once a week in such a way that we may still remain good friends."

"Then don't refuse me," he began, but hearing an impatient sigh from me he quickly selected a safer topic—my low spirits. That is the advantage of boys, they are so easily repressed.

I liked his sympathy, and poured out a history of the day's horrors which lasted till we reached my door, and then Charlie had another relapse.

"I'd break both my legs to be nursed by you, Susan. What luck some fellows have!"

"Don't be a goose and don't call me Susan," I answered.

"Promise me not to get interested in this Sinclair," he entreated. "You know nothing about him; he may be an awful sort."

"He was on his way to stay with the Birds," I retorted.

"That's against him," snapped Charlie.

"Not as much against him as if he accepted their hospitality and then made nasty speeches," I answered.

"Oh! all right," he said. "Go your own way, and when you've got to like him perhaps you will find out he has a wife and children."

"I know that already," I answered, laughing; "at least, I know he has a wife."

"Thank Heaven!" said Charlie piously, and disappeared in the darkness.

How wonderful is this thing we call human attraction! Here is Charlie Johnstone, a good-looking, honest gentleman, with a fair share of humor and all the money he can spend, and I give him no second thought; and there is Mr. Sinclair, first seen behind disfiguring glasses, and then lying like a crushed worm on my divan, and my imagination cannot let him alone. His eyes and smile are always coming back to me. I am guessing at his feelings, at his past life. I am putting myself in the place of his poor wife and grieving for her grief, and for anything I know he may be quite unworthy her interest or mine.

III.

THINGS looked very unpromising for Mr. Sinclair when I got home. McTorture decided to stay for the night, and he and Doctor Gale were rarely out of the sickroom, but by the next day the bad symptoms had vanished and the great man went back to town. We soon settled down to our new duties, and it seemed to me as if Rookwood had always had a sick man to be considered and that our present life was to go on interminably.

The third day I was loitering over a late breakfast when Laretta burst in upon me. She never waits to be invited to my bedroom or table, but always assumes that her company is agreeable.

"Well," she began, "so you have got the man who was hurt in his automobile staying here! Why didn't you tell us? Aunt Tilly says she thinks it's awfully improper; that a young widow's reputation is even more easily damaged than a girl's, and she thinks you ought to pack up and go away," and Laretta pursed her mouth and looked primly pure.

"I wish," I said irritably, "you would learn not to repeat disagreeable things. I do not intend going away, and if Mrs. Tobin considers my reputation endangered she had better keep you at home."

"Is he good-looking, Susan?" she responded, perfectly unmoved by my crossness and seating herself at the table. "Do you always

have grapefruit for breakfast? Aunt Tilly says they are thirty-five cents apiece and too dear for her, but she says you know how to make poor Tom's money fly!"

"Lauretta!" I exclaimed, glaring at her, "be good enough to let my expenses alone, and never again dare to tell me what Mrs. Tobin says about me."

"I didn't mean to vex you," she said stupidly. "What is that cereal you are eating? It looks awfully good, and your cream is so much thicker than ours. Aunt Tilly says that our butter brings forty cents a pound and pays for the keep of the cows, but that you——"

"Lauretta," I interrupted, "you are going to do it again, and I tell you plainly I don't care what the cows cost."

"I suppose he's in the spare-room," irrelevantly responded my feather-brained visitor, and, of course, I knew she meant Mr. Sinclair, because cows are not *he's*. "Don't you think I might steal in through the library and peep at him. They keep his door half-open; I noticed it as I passed."

"Certainly not," I answered, turning my head to help myself to butter, and when I looked back she was gone.

Surely she would not be so bold as to pry into a man's bedroom? But that is just what she did, dancing back in a few minutes in a great state of excitement.

"I stole through the billiard-room and into the library, and the spare-room door was open with a screen before it, so I stuck my head just a little way round the screen and the nurse never saw me, but *he* did. He smiled, and oh! Susan, I believe he winked!" and she doubled herself up with delight. "And I shook him a by-bye and ran away. He is quite the handsomest creature I ever saw. My heart has gone forever. Give me that piece of roll you have just buttered, and oh! Susan, let me come every day."

"You are the most ill-behaved girl I ever knew," I said, thoroughly disgusted, "and I sincerely hope you will never cross this threshold till after Mr. Sinclair goes. What must he think of you? I have a great mind to tell Mrs. Tobin."

"You wouldn't be so ill-natured!" she responded. "Aunt Tilly does hate unladylike behavior. She says Mrs. Bird is a disgrace to the neighborhood, but she does think it strange she has not asked me to her dance Friday night as long as Charlie Johnstone is staying there. Not that she would let me go if I were asked, because she disapproves of the whole Bird set."

"An unsavory cageful," I agreed. "But please go home now, Lauretta, I have no more time to give you."

She reluctantly wriggled into her little, tight jacket and adjusted

a pin in her scarlet hat. She was never without a dash of red somewhere in her dress, and it was most becoming. She was certainly a pretty creature, so trim and rounded, and so sprightly in manner, with an underlying dulness which was never suspected on first acquaintance. Dull as she was, she must have understood that she was in my black books, for she let me alone for several days.

Towards the end of the week Jane pursued me to my bedroom one afternoon when I had just returned from town tired and hungry.

"The gentleman do be asking for you," she said. "I guess it's about gettin' some letters wrote."

"I thought Flinders wrote for him," I objected.

"The likes of *yous*," she explained, "is always kinder ashamed to show yer feelin's to the likes of us, so that maybe's why he wants you to write."

"Probably he wishes to write to Mrs. Sinclair," I said reflectively.

"Or the child," put in Jane.

"Is there a child?" I asked, with a vague feeling of regret which was too faint even for recognition.

"There is," said Jane, "a delicate scrapine of a thing, more trouble to raise than a canary-bird by what Flinders says. No one would believe she was Mr. Harry's child, he says. Sure it's on her account the mother keeps in Europe."

I gathered some writing materials and, telling Jane to order some tea for me, went to my guest. We had met several times since that eventful day when he had first taken possession of his present quarters, but my share of watching had usually been when he was asleep, or forbidden to excite himself by talking, and our intercourse had been confined to a study of each other's faces rather than any exchange of ideas.

Two bandaged hands lay on the coverlet, but the left one was in process of rapid recovery. He could use his fingers, and between the first and second was a lighted cigarette.

"Do you mind smoke?" he apologized. "I should not have lighted it if I had known you would come so soon," and he motioned to Flinders to take it away, but I saw regret in every feature.

"On the contrary," I said, "I like it. Give me one and I will keep you company," and I helped myself out of his case and struck a match in the most scientific manner.

There was vanity equal to Lauretta's in the action, for I hate smoking, but I enjoyed the shock I saw it gave him. I am naturally dignified, and my features of the pure, clear-cut, ethereal stamp. It was like levity in an angel and it puzzled him.

"Jane told me you had letters to write this afternoon. May I be your amanuensis?" I asked between my puffs.

"You are very kind," he answered, dismissing Flinders. "You see, Flinders and I do not always hit it off in the spelling. I do very well when I drive my own pen, but when he springs words on me I get all tangled up."

"I must not appeal to you then," I said, dipping my pen in the ink.

"Did you date it?" he asked anxiously. "Women never do."

"Rookwood, November 8," I read.

"Rookwood is not your postoffice," he objected.

I began to get cross.

"I just read that to satisfy you," I said. "The whole top of my paper is covered with addresses—post, telegraph, telephone—and I only had to add the date. I don't wonder that you fluster Flinders!"

"That's a good alliteration," he laughed. "Begin

"DEAR MOPSIE:"

I nodded.

"You are not to worry about me, for I am nearly well, though, as my cable told you, the automobile gave me a spill by trying to leap a ditch like the fool it is!"

"Perhaps it wasn't the automobile that was the fool," I suggested.

"Perhaps not," he agreed. "Politeness warns me not to try to fix the blame," and his eyes were laughing, though the words cut.

"Go on," I murmured.

"It happened this way. I was going lickerty split down a hill——"

"I don't know how to spell *lickerty split*," I interrupted. "Couldn't you be going some other way?"

"You said you would not appeal to me for spelling," he remonstrated; "besides, that was the way I was going."

"When suddenly in front of me, not fifty yards off, I saw an open trench across the road. I tried to slow down, but the brakes wouldn't work, and we sailed into it at the rate of forty miles an hour. Flinders fell on his head and naturally was unhurt, while I was landed under the confounded thing and found myself quite seriously shaken up. Not counting scratches, I have dislocated my right wrist and sprained my left thumb, so it will be some time before I shall be able to write to you myself."

Here I broke in.

"Aren't you going to tell about your hip?" I asked, amazed.

The Green Dragon

"When I get well, perhaps; I have told her enough to explain why I cannot write. Now I am going to tell her about you.

"Do not think of coming out to me, for I shall be all right before you could get here, and besides, as usual, I have fallen on my feet." ("I wonder how I did fall!" he soliloquized.) "The accident happened just outside the place where I am now staying. It belongs to Mrs. Thomas Eliot, and she is my most kind hostess. No words can——"

"I can't write all that trash about myself," I urged, but he frowned and continued in the same tone.

"No words can describe the debt of gratitude I owe her. She has turned her house into a hospital and sent for the best surgeon in New York to make sure I'm all right, while her own special Doctor—old Gale—is the nicest, cleverest old boy I ever came across, and between them I am having the time of my life.

"Give my love to Dolly and tell her she shall never be punished again by being sent to bed in the daytime—it is horrid!

"I confess I should like to see you both.

"Affectionately yours,

"HARRINGTON SINCLAIR."

"Now for the address," I suggested.

"Mrs. Sinclair," he began.

"No first name?" I asked.

"Oh, well!" he agreed, "perhaps it would be better.

"MRS. HARRINGTON SINCLAIR,

"Palace Hotel,

"St. Moritz,

"Switzerland."

"Can I do anything else for you?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "talk to me. If you knew the weariness of lying here hour after hour you would not be so chary with your society. Once you brought your knitting. It was very pleasant—a sort of guarantee you meant to stay for some time."

"It seems rather an unusual thing to do," I began, getting pink.

"Ah," he said, "that is it! You have the impulse lent by pity and nullified by propriety—or is it prudence? You don't know me—I may be a bold, bad man—I have brought no credentials. You are willing to open the doors of your house to a stranger, but not the door to your intimacy. You are right; I respect your good sense. But"—and that charming smile I was beginning to know so well crept over his face—"suppose we get Mr. Bird to testify to my respectability (for he can-

not do much more, I was asked there in response to a letter of introduction from a mutual friend), would you feel any happier about me?"

"How can you attribute such unpleasant motives to me?" I asked. "After being thrown with you for ten minutes I knew all I needed to know—that you were a gentleman."

"Perhaps I have the attributes without the soul, but I should like to justify your good opinion. May I testify to my own character? I am not very good, but I have never done anything to be ashamed of. Also I can be what you might call 'pretty behaved,' and I will exercise the talent for all it is worth if you will sit with me."

I touched the bell and when Jane appeared sent for my knitting. Mr. Sinclair looked pleased. We talked of St. Moritz, where Mrs. Sinclair was spending the winter and which I knew so well. We talked of books till, like all modern novel readers, we fell to discussing Meredith and James. I confessed to a taste for James, which Mr. Sinclair declared unhealthy.

"There is something human about Meredith," he agreed. "Besides the vividness conveyed by those impressionist sentences of his, he gives you types of real men and women, eccentric, perhaps, but belonging to nature as well as civilization. With James and his following it is the dissection of the neurotic, interesting as a specialist's essay to those in search of psychological phenomena in effete overdevelopment, but a sealed book to the average reader."

"You would agree, then," I answered, "with a sentence I came across the other day in one of the evening papers—'Henry James has long ignored the considerations which move men in the mass, and now follows to their remotest implications the individual caprices of a sophisticated class of men and women.'"

"Admirably expressed!" he began, when the servant announced the tea Jane had ordered for me and, most unwillingly, I rose to go.

Mr. Sinclair held out a detaining hand.

"Please have your tea brought here and make me a cup. Women's hands are so charming when busied with a tea-tray, and, besides, I have not said half my say."

It was silly in me to smile, but I knew my hands were attractive. As for his say, it had to be indefinitely postponed, for, trotting in after the tea-tray, like a tame cat, came Lauretta, unasked, unexpected, and most unwelcome—that is, to me.

Mr. Sinclair seemed to feel otherwise. He begged for an introduction, declaring that her charming face had already visited his dreams, and that he found the reality even more bewitching. He stared boldly at Lauretta's pretty, smug countenance.

She ran behind the screen and peeped out at him as she had done that first day.

"Was that the dream?" she asked.

"The same!" with enthusiasm. "Only lovelier in this hat than it was in the other."

I had made his tea and was rising to give it to him when Lauretta took it from my hand.

"Let me," she persisted.

"You know I have to be fed," Mr. Sinclair suggested.

He was alternately the most deferential and the most impertinent of men. It took all my dignity at times to keep him in order, but as for Lauretta, I believe she likes familiarity. She drew a chair to his bedside and, tucking a napkin under his chin, fed him his tea as if she had been his trained nurse. Their jokes were endless, and she actually held his muffin for him to bite. By the time the tea was finished he had found out that the way to her favor lay through chocolates, and she, on her part, had promised him a photograph of herself in the hat he found so becoming. They were so absorbed in each other that I might have been miles away, and, distinctly, I did not like it. I took the opportunity to scribble a note that I had forgotten to answer till that moment.

Suddenly Lauretta remembered my existence. I was necessary to her schemes. She put down Mr. Sinclair's cup and came pirouetting over to me.

"Are you asked to the Birds' dance on Friday?" she asked.

"I am, and have declined," I said, pointing to the note I had just written and placed on the tray.

Lauretta clasped me round the neck.

"Susan dear, *please* accept; Aunt Tilly says I may go if you will chaperone me, and I never go anywhere, and I love to dance, and one is only young once, and I have such a pretty frock! It can't make much difference to you, and it would be such a pleasure to me."

I could have answered in her own words that I detested the whole Bird set, but Lauretta pleading for the pleasures of her age seemed to me pathetic. If I were shut up in Tobin Towers with Aunt Tilly as my sole companion, I might plead to be taken to the Birds' fandangoes.

"I will take you, Lauretta," I said, tearing up my note.

She capered round the room, coming back to kiss me every few seconds.

"I am asked to spend the night," she said. "Are you?"

"I draw the line there, Lauretta," I answered. "You can stay if you like, and Aunt Tilly permit it, but I shall come home."

The figure in bed moved uneasily.

"Are your roads safe at night?" he asked.

"I am not going in an automobile," I answered, with a kind of grim humor which discouraged him.

Lauretta, having achieved the object of her visit, bade us a reluctant farewell. She had the Tobin Towers landau and did not dare to keep the coachman waiting. The Autocrat of all the Russias isn't to be compared with the coachman of the rich dowager. His person, his horses, his bank account, and his insolence swell in unison.

Doctor Gales's pleasant voice reached us from the hall, speaking to his niece. I hastened to gather my belongings together in order to surrender my guest to his physician and nurse, but he stopped me as I passed his bed for a last word.

"Come again soon," he said almost timidly. "In time you might even convert me into a Jamesite. My mind is singularly open to conviction."

IV.

FRIDAY came, cold and crisp. My fire looked so inviting that I dreaded leaving it to fulfil my promise to Lauretta. To drive five miles over rough roads when your bed is beckoning to you seems almost too hard a fate. Jane had put out for me a white frock with black sashes. I had meant to wear black velvet, but she was firm.

"If Mr. Eliot was here," she said, "sure 'twould be himself would be pleased to see you actin' so reasonable."

Her words set my thoughts on a new trail, and I let her dress me as she liked.

Would Tom approve of all my conduct? Would he approve of my visitor downstairs, and the prominence I was allowing him to usurp in my thoughts? My outward deportment was exemplary, but how about my fancy? Was it quite as free as when this blue-eyed giant was carried across my threshold? "He is married," said conscience, and I, not even true to myself, answered, "Thank Heaven!"

At ten o'clock I drove to Tobin Towers for Lauretta, and then I was forced to go in and show my finery to Aunt Tilly. She didn't even thank me for chaperoning her niece, but said the way older people were ignored nowadays was disgraceful; that she would have taken Lauretta herself if she had been asked, and didn't I think her purple velvet was enough dress for anything?

I said to myself that purple velvet would make its own occasion.

The neighborhood was well represented at the Birds' and the dance in full swing when we arrived. Charlie Johnstone was standing near the staircase and at once begged for every dance and supper besides, so I made terms. If he would dance the cotillon with Lauretta I would be kind, otherwise I should give away all my dances. He reluctantly succumbed. I need not have bargained about my charge, as it turned out, for she was very pretty and well dressed,—Aunt Tilly was generous in such matters,—and she was quite the success of the evening.

As for me, I found myself so companionable to my host that I could

not shake him off, even when Charlie came to claim my promise. Mr. Bird wanted to talk about Mr. Sinclair, and I soon learned the little he knew about him. His friend B——, of the American legation in Paris, had written out to him to do all he could for Sinclair, who was an awfully good fellow. He was a Californian, but his family had lived abroad for twenty years, and he really knew little of New York except through the medium of the American colony in Paris. I said I believed he had a wife and child, and Mr. Bird thought it more than possible. California fortunes were not likely to go unexploited in France. Some clever French woman would be sure to have landed him for her daughter.

At supper Charlie Johnstone persuaded me to let him bring me something to the conservatory, where it was cool and quiet. It was more romantic than prudence could approve, but Charlie had been so amenable to my requests that I stretched a point to pleasure him. It was a mistake, like all concessions. He began promptly.

"Mrs. Eliot, I don't mean to tease, but don't you like me a little bit this evening?"

"Immensely!" I answered honestly.

"Dear Susan,"—here he got a lively pink,—“please be engaged to me for a week and see whether you don't like me better than you think.”

"I shall never marry again," I answered, "and I am hardly the person to lend myself to a farce."

As usual, contradiction irritated "mamma's only boy."

"I fancy you would give a different answer to the man in your spare-room if he had not provided himself with a wife before he met you. The neighborhood is ringing with gossip about your having him there, I can tell you."

"I wonder you are not ashamed to run about like a spaniel retrieving scandals," I said contemptuously.

"If I am a retriever," he said angrily, "I can lay some rather high game at your feet. How would you like to know that Sinclair's wife couldn't live with him?"

"I don't see how it concerns me," I answered, knowing well it was a lie, for had I not written to her myself?

"Doesn't it concern you to know that everyone is painting your conduct in the blackest colors?"

"They can paint me as black as the Devil," I said, losing patience, "but I am not going to change my name to Johnstone by way of white-wash."

"I shall never ask you again," he said, glaring at me like a sulky child.

"Heaven be praised!" I snapped.

How much farther these amenities might have proceeded I cannot tell, if approaching voices had not warned us that we might be overheard, and in a moment Mrs. Bird and Dicky Remsen strolled into the conservatory and sat down under our palm-tree on the other side. They could not have seen us, for Mrs. Bird was saying:

"No, Dicky, it doesn't give me a sensation to have you hold my hand, so you can just drop it, my boy. Not that I set up for much propriety; anyhow, I don't pose as an example to the neighborhood and then keep a man like Harrington Sinclair shut up in my house and never send word to his friends where he is?"

Charlie looked at me in malicious triumph, and I flushed in distress. There was some force in Mrs. Bird's strictures. I had known Mr. Sinclair was on his way to their house and I should have informed them at once. On the other hand, the accident was of public notoriety, and it would have been but a natural courtesy on Mr. Bird's part had he hastened to my house to offer his services in such an emergency, whereas, with the exception of calling now and then to inquire and leave a card, he had taken no notice of his expected guest. They were probably only too glad to have escaped such an interruption to their merrymaking as Mr. Sinclair's illness would have been, and I felt indignant at Mrs. Bird's misrepresentation of my conduct.

Without a word I left my seat under the palm-tree and joined Lauretta in the hall, where she was making a protracted supper in company with the Rector.

Charlie Johnstone followed in my wake, half ashamed at what had taken place, half pleased to have his warnings so promptly confirmed. He asked whether we should have our supper brought to Miss Gales's table, but I so plainly intimated that I could dispense with his company that he went off more deeply offended than ever before.

Youthful spirits are hard to quell; in spite of my quarrel with Charlie Johnstone and the censures of Mrs. Bird, I found myself looking forward to the cotillon with childish impatience. It was my first dance since my morning, and the music and gayety gave me true pleasure. My partner, an inoffensive young person staying in the house, had little of my society, for I was constantly being taken out, and Lauretta herself was not more light-minded than I.

The clock was striking four when the dance broke up with an old-fashioned jig, and I ran upstairs to the dressing-room with my white frock hanging in tatters about my feet. I was the last to leave, even the house party were going to their rooms.

The winter's morning had no thought of breaking; it was as dark as midnight when I stepped into the brougham to drive home. The Birds' long avenue was lighted with little colored lanterns hung from

the trees, and the road seemed quite gay until we passed the entrance and plunged into the night. Coachman and horses seemed of one mind in speeding to their beds, and we covered the first two miles in splendid style, but at the top of a hill which marked the halfway the carriage came to a standstill and the coachman called something to me which I could not hear through the shut window. As I opened the door to speak to him I saw a reflection in the sky behind us which could only come from a fire.

"It's at Mr. Bird's, Ma'am," Saunders assured me, and I ordered him to return with all expedition to the scene of the late festivities.

My fancy pictured all possible horrors,—Lauretta in danger and I responsible to Mrs. Tobin for her safety, or, at best, all the inmates of the fated house huddled on the lawn to watch their possessions licked up by the merry flames.

"Drive faster!" I shouted.

At the gate Saunders tried to reassure me. He declared the fire must be out, there was no light through the trees, but I could not be satisfied till I had seen and spoken with Lauretta.

The little lanterns had all gone out, and Saunders drove slowly and carefully in a way which maddened me. As we drew up at the front door the house was certainly in status quo, with no sign of confusion outside, only within the electric lights were still burning and shadows were whirling past the white drop-shades in the windows. In a moment I was in the hall, and what a scene met my eyes!

On a table in the middle of the ballroom sat Charlie Johnstone enthroned on the piano-stool. In his lap he held an enormous cake taken from the supper-table, while trailing past him two by two, that he might judge the merits of their performance, came the rest of the party doing a cakewalk.

Such a crazy crowd was never seen out of Bedlam; some were in furs and dressing-gowns, some in nightgowns and golf-capes, the men in pajamas and such upper garments as had first come to hand.

The musicians, fortunately for them, had left before the excitement of the fire, but a phonograph was furnishing the newest concert-hall airs with all the force of its nasal twang.

Lauretta led the procession with Mr. Bird. That gentleman had had quite as much of his own good cheer as he could carry, and threw an energy into the contortions of his dancing which would have been the despair of a true Sambo. He was dressed in checked pajamas and a dress-coat and had ornamented his head with a tall hat. Lauretta wore carriage boots and a pink silk petticoat, and over the lace frills of her nightgown fell a long fur tippet. Her lithe body was swayed backward till she looked as if she might lose her balance, and her feet in their great boots were making the most impossible steps to

the music. Her face was turned over one shoulder away from her partner, and her little hands were flapped in his direction as if to defend herself from the ardor of his pursuit.

Behind them came the others, leaping and bounding like kangaroos.

I may have been a spoilsport, but indignation with Lauretta swallowed up every other feeling—she, at least, had been decently brought up and should have respected herself.

"Lauretta," I cried, "I wish to speak to you."

"Oh Susan!" she exclaimed, coming to a standstill beside me, "I am having such fun. You see the chimney took fire and we thought the house was going too, so we all rushed out just as we were, and now we are celebrating our escape."

"Get your things on," I said. "I shall take you home," and approaching Mrs. Bird I offered as polite an excuse as I could frame on the spur of the moment. I said Mrs. Tobin would hear of the fire and be alarmed, and if Lauretta were taken home now it might spare the old lady much anxiety.

Mrs. Bird received my explanation with a broad grin.

"You find our frolic too much of a leg-dance," she said coarsely. "Your own amusements are hardly likely to err in this respect at present."

I presumed she was alluding to Mr. Sinclair's crippled condition, but I ignored the impertinence.

"I trust my amusements will not err in any direction," I said loftily, walking out of the ballroom.

Mr. Bird, who was without a partner owing to my interference, was forgiving enough to follow me into the hall and to press me to join him in a glass of champagne before once more braving the morning air, but I declined his hospitality, and as soon as Lauretta appeared I called for my carriage.

Shut up in the brougham I felt the full force of that young lady's resentment. She answered my questions in monosyllables or else sat in sulky silence.

"I am sorry to take you away if you were enjoying yourself," I began, "but really the fun was beyond decency."

"Beyond prudery," she sniffed.

I took no notice.

"I suppose," I went on, "you were all assembled in those wonderful costumes in response to an alarm of fire."

"Of course," she agreed testily.

"What set the chimney on fire?" I pursued.

"Servants," she answered.

"Burning the débris of cotillon favors?"

"I suppose so," sulkily.

"You must spend what remains of the night with me," I said cheerfully. "It would never do to ring them up at Tobin Towers at this hour."

"Our house is always open by six o'clock and it cannot be far from that now," she answered in her eagerness to escape from my company. "Our servants are not allowed to spend their mornings in bed, as Aunt Tilly says yours——"

"Thank you, Lauretta," I interrupted, "I do not care to hear Mrs. Tobin's views of my housekeeping. I will gladly take you home."

And the rest of the drive was accomplished in silence.

This question of chaperonage is a nice one. Is it to be treated as a concession to make-believe conventionality, a mere sinecure, or is it to be undertaken with some sense of responsibility? I should not have left my own young sister capering in *deshabille* in such riotous company, so why should I leave Lauretta?

At Tobin Towers a sleepy kitchenmaid responded to our ring, and I gave a gasp of relief as the door closed behind my indignant companion.

A faint streak of light was defining the hilltops to the east. Lights were glancing in the laborers' cottages. What a dissipated hour for a sober-minded woman to be returning from a ball!

One of the dearly purchased comforts of being your own mistress is the complete emancipation from solicitude. No one sits up for me, because I do not allow it. I have my latch-key and can ring for Jane when I need her.

As I opened my front door I was startled to see a figure rise from the nearest hall chair. It was Flinders.

"If you please, Ma'am, I am to let Mr. Sinclair know the moment you come in; he has been greatly worried about you for the last three hours."

Somebody anxious about my safety! was it pleasant or simply absurd? At any rate, I could not have resented it, for I explained at some length to Flinders the episode of the burning chimney and watched him cross the library on his way to his master's bedside with a feeling of gladness. After all, then, it is agreeable to know that there is someone "to mark your coming." I balanced the fact against my prized freedom, and the scale tipped towards the side of fetters. We women are a foolish sisterhood, clamoring for independence and forever forging our own chains.

V.

THE improvement in my invalid was rapid from the surgeons' point of view, but in their desire for a perfect cure the rules had never been relaxed. There he lay, the weights hanging from the broken

leg, as helpless as a baby except that his hands were once more serviceable.

What I had at first regarded as a concession on my part soon became a daily habit, and I now spent every afternoon in his room. I read aloud, we played piquet or cribbage, and, most dangerous of all, we talked.

He rarely spoke of his recent past. Sometimes he talked of his schooldays in France and the strange companions he had had—semi-royalties who hated to be clean; a duke's son who purloined a piece of his mother's jewelry and pawned it to treat the school to cakes; the hero of the playground, a handsome, generous boy whose word was law, and who left suddenly when it became known his father was the most celebrated forger in France. Later he told me how he had gone back to California for his university course and how true an American he was in all his sympathies. He admired his countrymen—he called them broad-minded, generous, dependable, hardworking. This was the land of all others, he declared, where ability and character combined always brought a man to the top, the land where the political ground felt firm under your feet, no matter what importations of disorder and anarchy might agitate the nation for a brief moment, for behind that element was always the steady common-sense of the great American people.

He used to grow so excited when this was his theme that the weights from his leg fairly rattled.

At last, one day, when I had listened for half an hour to a most graphic account of his father's life in California, his marvellous luck (which according to his son was no luck, but the natural outcome of genius and judgment) and of all they owed to this country, I could curb my tongue no longer, and burst out with,—

"Then why under the sun do you not live in the land you value, instead of being that most contemptible of creatures, a man without a country?"

"What else did you suppose I came here for?" he asked. "I am due in San Francisco on the first of January to take my brother's place in the banking-house. One of us is always there; the other usually looks after the family abroad."

It was the first I knew of this brother.

"Is your brother married?" I asked, forgetting in my interest the rudeness of searching questions.

"He has been," he answered shortly, and I thought I had fallen in his estimation through my intrusive curiosity. I hastened to change the subject.

"Surely you will not be able to make the journey to the Pacific as soon as the holidays," I remonstrated, and my heart sank as I waited for his reply.

He was enough of a Yankee to answer my question by another.

"Shall you miss me?" he asked, gazing into my eyes as if existence depended upon what he saw there.

"Do you think the prospect of being thrown back on Jane's company a lively one?" I said, pursuing his interrogatory methods.

"And yet, according to Jane," he said, with a sigh, "you value your solitude; you don't like to be taken out of the past; you prefer eating your own heart in silence."

Ah, so I did! but it was a heart which beat for him instead of the past. So this was his idea of me? Jane had done me a service with her loquacity. She had given him an impression of my faithfulness to Tom's memory which, however far from the truth, would serve as a blind to his ever guessing the depths of my present folly. I wondered what else she had confided of my history during her long hours of watching, but I was too proud to ask him, and while I meant to call her to an account, I could not bring myself to question her.

Sometimes I imagined he cared for me as I did for him—a hopeless, silent love, whose truest homage was in suppression. Sometimes I thought he was on the very verge of a declaration, which I should have to treat as an insult. He had been brought up in the land where married lovers hardly shock the moral sense.

I was so lost in my reverie that I fairly jumped when he spoke again.

"What an awful upsetting I must have made in your life," he lamented, "and all the time I have been so happy. I wish I could think you had been a little happy too."

I pulled myself together with an effort and answered guardedly,—

"Pray do not misunderstand me when I say your companionship has been delightful to me."

"I'm not likely to misunderstand," he said bitterly. "You surround yourself with a sufficiently chilling atmosphere."

A silence fell between us. He was evidently making up his mind to say something he found difficult. Presently it came.

"I ought to tell you that at last I have written abroad the whole truth about my accident. Now," he murmured, half to himself, "if Mopsie chooses to come it can make little difference, for by the time she is here I should have to be going at any rate. I have behaved disgracefully in billeting myself upon you for this long illness and concealing the facts from my people, but at first I did it to save them from the shock, and then each day made my life here more precious to me, till I could not, by my own act, put an end to my happiness." Again his eyes sought my face, and finding mine averted he added: "At last shame drove me to it. I have sacrificed the joy of my present to duty, because I thought you would approve."

"I don't see what there is to sacrifice," I said coldly. "Mrs. Sinclair's coming could make no difference except to give you two companions instead of one."

"Ah! you don't know her," he urged. "She has grand qualities—there is something better than affection between us, there is friendship. She shares my tastes, she is almost masculine in her conception of a man's requirements—but she wants to be first with those she loves; she never shares her empire."

"No one expects her to share it," I said haughtily.

"Yes, but it is no longer hers as far as I am concerned," he said, with that look of boyish sweetness in his face that made him irresistible.

How did he dare say these things with that look of innocence? I started to my feet in a frenzy of love and indignation. First he sings the perfections of his wife, then he intimates the wrong I have done their conjugal relations.

"Never again allude to this subject," I said imperiously. "We will talk books and politics for the few weeks we are to be together, but of ourselves, not a word."

"I am at your orders," he said, but he looked unhappy.

Such conversations were not good for me; they preyed upon my spirits. The heart and conscience at variance is ever disturbing to the nerves. I lost my appetite and then my color. I started at every noise, and tears came all too easily.

Jane clucked over me like an old hen. She was always surprising me with what she called "pick-ups" at odd hours,—gruelly messes to *timpt* my appetite,—and finding I did not revive under that treatment, she went to town and brought me flannels which might have comforted an arctic explorer, but which I utterly repudiated.

"What good is there in thim flimsies of lace to kape the cowld out of your bones?" she demanded in scorn.

But the trouble lay deeper than gruel and flannel could reach.

At last my pale face aroused Doctor Gales's solicitude.

"Why, Ladybird," he said, "I shall have to take you in hand. You have been throwing your rouge-pots out of the window."

"Tallow-faced, like Juliet! Don't you like me pale?" I answered, laughing.

"I like you any way, but I think I have overestimated your strength. I should not have insisted upon giving you the anxiety of an invalid in your house, and yet in Tom's last illness you were my great dependence." He came to where I was standing by the fire and laid his fingers on my wrist. "Not very steady," was his comment.

How could it be steady when those searching gray eyes were making

gimlet-holes into my brain through which he might read the things I was hiding from myself?

"I'll give you a week to get well here," he went on, "and if at the end of that time I see no improvement, I shall send you and Jane to Bermuda."

"What will become of my house and your patient?" I asked, indignant at his proposal to spirit me away from the only spot on earth where I cared to be.

"My patient will have his weights off in a day or two, and by Christmas he can be up and away."

It was nearly the middle of December, so my happiness, like a little St. Martin's summer, was to be counted by days. All the doctors in the land should not make me go away. I would not lose a minute of this precious time. I could deceive as well as another—why not a dash of rouge and a little affected gayety? and the Doctor and Jane would find me myself again.

The gayety should begin at once.

"Do you know," I asked, "that I am out of favor at Tobin Towers? Lauretta has ignored my existence ever since I fetched her away from the Birds' dance two weeks ago."

He looked quizzical.

"It isn't so much that *you* are out of favor as that somebody else is *in*. Lauretta has a beau!"

I liked to hear him use the nice, old-fashioned word. It was so safe to mean much or little. Now for a guess.

"That is hardly a wonder for a pretty girl," I said. "Might his name be Johnstone?"

The Doctor winked solemnly.

"I haven't said so, have I?" he demanded.

"Mum's the word," I answered. "Is it serious?"

"He has been to drive alone with Mathilda in the landau with all the windows shut," he answered.

"Then it's an engagement for sure!" I cried, clapping my hands.

"I think you are a little premature as to conclusions, Ladybird, but I should say if the young gentleman is searching for his affinity in light-mindedness, our Lauretta would fill the bill for all time."

"Speak more kindly of your nephew-apparent," I returned; "he enjoys the privilege of my friendship."

"So I have heard," he said, laughing, "and that Lauretta caught him on the rebound. In order to rebound a fellow has to be bounced, I believe! How is that for slang, Ladybird?"

"It doesn't suit your beautiful white hair," I answered.

"Ah, well, I must be going," he said, picking up his hat. "You need more fresh air, my child. Begin riding again. I haven't seen

you on horseback since our patient came here. If the exercise exhausts you, try driving twice a day."

All men seem to hold women's time at no account,—indeed, I can go a step further and say that any employment they offer us they seem to consider as great a boon as occupation to a convict. In many cases a woman's duties are self-centred; her household cares may benefit none but herself if fate have left her alone in the world; her reading may have no result beyond individual culture; her charities may be mischievous in their outcome; but such as they are, her habits are formed upon them, and to be ordered to give up one's daylight hours to the pursuit of health is as upsetting as to order a business man on a yachting cruise.

I did not dare entirely to disregard the advice of my physician, but I did as little as I could.

One morning the following week I ordered my horse and went to my room to dress for the ride. My toilette had not proceeded very far when an impatient tap came at the door and Lauretta's voice demanded admittance. She never waits to hear your answer, but comes unless opposed by bolt and bar.

"How funny you look!" she remarked.

"If there is one place where you are entitled to look *funny* without exciting comment, it is in your own bedroom with the door shut," I answered; but I might have spared the rebuke, for her mind had already detached itself from my riding-boots and flown to her own concerns with the directness of a bird to its nest.

"Have you any engagement for Saturday evening?" she inquired. "Aunt Tilly means to give a dinner party if she can get enough people and she counts upon you, of course. We are to have Mr. Johnstone with us over Sunday, and we want to do something to amuse him."

"I fancy he would be better amused by a tête-à-tête with you while Aunt Tilly takes her forty winks," I ventured.

Lauretta looked pleased and self-conscious. She began a long account of recent events in which Mr. Johnstone's name marked every incident, and I saw the truth of Doctor Gale's statement that resentment had little to do with her neglect of me.

She and Aunt Tilly had been in New York for a week, ostensibly on account of visits to the dentist, but from the nature of the amusements they had patronized Mr. Johnstone must have been an important factor in their arrangements. Still, poor Mrs. Tobin had been in dental toils. Her whole glistening façade had become unsteady owing to the unreliable disposition of two structural supports. As Jane would say, too much *distress* on the first molars made a whole gum-set imperative.

I begged Lauretta to bring Mr. Johnstone to lunch with me on the important Saturday, but she hesitated. She said he was so particular about what a lady could do that he might object to her being thrown with Mr. Sinclair, "of whom we really know nothing," she concluded, shrugging her shoulders and looking propriety.

"Are you engaged to Mr. Johnstone, Lauretta, that he ventures to direct your conduct?" I asked, amazed.

"No," she said hesitatingly, "but Aunt Tilly consults him about a great many points, and when I happened to say that you received all your friends in the library whom you thought likely to amuse Mr. Sinclair, Mr. Johnstone said it was a pity you laid yourself open to such widespread comment, and he advised me to confine my visits here to the morning hours, when Mr. Sinclair kept his room."

My guest had just been promoted to a wheeled-chair and gave me his company at lunch and dinner. The pleasure would have been greater had not every improvement in his condition reminded me how near was the time of his departure.

Lauretta's frankness had no longer the power to irritate me; I answered quite pleasantly,—

"In case Mr. Johnstone should feel inclined to lunch with Mr. Sinclair and me, I shall be very glad to see you both on Saturday at one o'clock."

Could human meekness go further.

Lauretta promised to let me know what the great autocrat felt about the danger of associating with me and departed. In a second she darted back.

"Aunt Tilly says you are to wear your best clothes on Saturday. She has noticed you think anything good enough for Steeplands, and it is a poor compliment to your hostess."

"It is the purple velvet," I commented silently to myself; "her guests have to be fine enough to justify its magnificence."

Again I returned the soft answer.

"I will do my best, and hang myself over with jewels like a Begum."

VI.

THE day before Mrs. Tobin's dinner party I spent in town shopping for Christmas, and returned late in the afternoon laden with packages. My appearance suggested the true suburban lady, a cross between the packhorse and the peddler.

The carriage was waiting for me at the station, and seeing Charlie Johnstone unsuccessfully searching for a conveyance to take him to Tobin Towers I offered to give him a lift. He seemed embarrassed—not to say sheepish—at my invitation, but a cold night stirs one's inclinations towards a comfortable brougham with hot-water tins and

fur rugs, and he was finally persuaded to give me his company for the two-mile drive. If he had refused, he would have had his own company for a two-mile walk, for I saw the last hack disappearing as we stepped into the carriage.

I had wanted an opportunity to talk with him for some time, and I made the best of my chance. I began by playfully reproaching him for his neglect of me, and then I hinted at his attentions to Lauretta as a thing he ought to have confided to so old a friend. I said that what he had always valued in me was my elder-sisterly attitude, only he didn't quite understand himself. His hostility began to melt as he found me disposed to accept the transference of his affections with equanimity. I fancy he had expected me to be sarcastic, and sarcasm was a weapon he greatly feared. Lauretta's direct methods would never puzzle him; the two were admirably suited to each other. He was not ready as yet to acknowledge his admiration for her, but it pleased him to hear it recognized by me. He was the modern Ahasuerus deposing the contumacious Vashti from his heart's throne to make room for the more yielding charms of the new Queen.

When I had beguiled him into good-humor with himself I ventured upon the point of discourse.

"We have always been friends," I began, "even when you have resented my guarding the relation from losing its true character by forcing it to become something more. I want to ask you a plain question. Have you ever known me careless of my good name—undignified—frivolous in my conduct?"

He had the courage of his opinions, for he answered,—

"Not as I have hitherto known you, but you are making a mistake now."

"I am making no mistake, if my friends will stand by me," I answered hotly. "It is this I wished to speak to you about; you are doing me an incalculable mischief. If you and my neighbors find pleasure in circulating cruel innuendos, I am at your mercy! What lonely woman's character can stand the libel of close friends?"

I think he was ashamed, for he cleared his throat as if to speak and no words came, so I went on.

"Can't you believe I am simply carrying out Doctor Gales's wishes and the demands of compassion?"

Here he interrupted,—

"I tried to reason with you about your imprudence long ago, Mrs. Eliot, before gossip was busy with your name."

"And what could I have done?" I demanded,—"turn a wounded man into the roads, or give up my house and servants to the rule of strangers?"

"Give up your house, of course," he answered. "What stood in the way?"

"Doctor Gales's entreaty for one thing, and common-sense for another," I responded. "Be my friend, Charlie, and do your best to stop this gossip!" and I held out my hand.

"Ah Susan!" he said with a sigh, "I believe even now you can twist me about as you please, and my greatest pleasure is to serve you. I am sure you know what is due to yourself in actual word and deed, but it maddened me to see you putting yourself in an equivocal position. I do not know whether jealousy makes a man keen to see or whether it distorts his vision, but I believed your scorn of my advice was the result of this man's influence over you, whether you recognized it or not."

"Let us believe that as there is no longer any jealousy on your part, you were mistaken about there being any influence on his." I was going to add that at any rate I was unconscious of any, but the truth is dear to me, and I had stretched it to its limit. Lauretta was a safer topic of conversation. We were already passing through her Sphinx-guarded gates.

"My dear boy," I said, "will you promise to count on my services with your little lady-love to any extent?"

"I thought I was cured of caring for you," he murmured, "but a few more talks like this and I should have no little lady-love."

"Don't coquet with shadows," I answered. "Your fancy for me is an obstruction, getting between you and the sunshine. Your little friend cares for you and is suited to you in every way. Take the good things which come naturally, and among them take my friendship, which ought to be worth something, because it is sincere."

He seized my hand and kissed it.

"Shall I ask her this evening, Susan?" he said meekly.

"You will make her very happy, and, I honestly believe, yourself too," I answered.

We stopped at Tobin Towers, and there was no excuse to linger. Charlie left me with a sigh, and instead of ringing the bell he stood watching the carriage round the curve.

As I turned over our conversation in my mind I felt I might take to heart my own advice to him, "Don't coquet with shadows." Wasn't I sacrificing my peace of mind to a shadow—a love whose substance belonged to another woman?

"A lot of mischief is done by too much introspection," I said speciously, addressing the fur rug. "The New Year will find Mr. Sinclair on his way to California and Susan herself again."

"All the comforts of home" is a comprehensive phrase, meaning different things to different people. To me, that cold evening, it

meant a cup of tea by my bedroom fire, a dressing-gown and slippers, and Jane pottering about, laying out my frock for dinner and drawing my bath. If you haven't any mother to purr over you, a Jane is not to be despised. The unquestioning love of an old servant is as soothing as the dumb homage of a dog—yours through good report and evil.

I found her childish interest in my packages a welcome distraction from the irritation of some of Charlie Johnstone's home-truths. I had brought her a dozen dolls to dress for her church Christmas-tree, and I offered to bear a hand if she would bring me a few to the library after dinner.

"Don't be troublin' yourself, darlint," she said, "the cook will be helpin' me. I find her a real tasty body."

I acquiesced in Jane's cannibalistic estimate of the cook's value, but insisted that I should like to dress some of the dolls. Perhaps I was glad of an excuse to sit up late in company which was so soon to be taken from me.

Her talk ran upon long-ago Christmases and my childish beliefs till she put my dress over my head, and then her attention was directed to my appearance.

"Dearie," she said, "ain't you growed thin? I can fasten your skirtband right into the third eye. Do you feel any distress on that last hook?"

"Not on the hook, Jane," I answered with a sigh, and I went downstairs to face my real *distress*, who was waiting for me in the library, seated in his wheeled-chair in his immaculate evening dress. He was thin, and the shadows under his eyes too violet, but what a gentleman he looked! Such an air of distinction!

Tom's old staghound, a privileged character, was resting his head on his knee; the evening papers were piled beside him, but he was not reading; the open door commanded the staircase and his eyes were watching—for what? I thought I knew!

"A day without you is a day lost," he said as I came towards him.

There was tenderness in his voice. I was close to his chair, and he took my hand and raised it to his lips. I suppose I was tired and excited, for I shrank away from him with a little cry of dismay. He looked surprised, and I quickly recovered myself. I should have remembered how little significance a person brought up abroad attaches to the action. As usual, I had played the fool, but I was saved the embarrassment of an explanation by the announcement of dinner. Flinders came to wheel his master to the dining-room, and in the presence of servants our talk was of an impersonal nature.

Every topic my guest touched upon became of interest to me. He had the faculty of making what was difficult seem simple, and that

without boring me with explanations—it was in his mode of presentment. Tom had always talked down to me; there were fields of public interest, of experiment and invention, through which he roamed alone because my experience as a woman had not led me along his paths. It suited him to make me his idolized plaything rather than his companion. Often in married life gratitude and resentment go hand in hand, and it had been so with me. Tom starved my intellect. Mr. Sinclair fed and stimulated it at the same time.

When we were settled down for the evening by the library fire Jane came with her dolls and silks and laces. Her manner to me in company was a study in deference; her "*dearies*" and "*darlints*" were relegated to dressing time.

"Mrs. Eliot, Ma'am," she began, with a polite bow to Mr. Sinclair, "here bees the dolls, and some remlets of silk. Don't be takin' too much pains, Ma'am, but just sew their clothes right on to their bodies and tie a trinklet round their necks with a ribbon, and when they're strung up on the Christmas-tree, sure, no one will see any little outrage in your sewin'."

"You give me courage, Jane!" I said, dismissing her, and then I added to Mr. Sinclair, "She has the true scheme of modern life; if you hide the outrages in your conduct with silk and trinkets, the world won't challenge you; it is the straightforward people who are criticised."

He laughed.

"I have noticed a deplorable leaning towards pessimism in your philosophy lately. Has the world been treating you badly?"

I could not answer truly, for the truth would have driven him from the house, so I disclaimed harboring any grievance, and to change his ideas I set him to unpacking the dolls, while I measured and sewed with a speed which did more credit to my good-will than to my stitches. I had just triumphantly clothed a lady in scarlet with flounces of lace and a magnificent jewel hung from her neck when, on raising my eyes, I knew I should see Mr. Sinclair having an acrobatic performance with the undressed dolls. I knew it because I was conscious this had all happened before—that he and I had sat at this table amusing ourselves with these same toys, and I knew he was about to say,—

"Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to introduce to your notice the Jane family, the most accomplished acrobats on earth."

The words followed swift on my thought. I gave a gasp of excitement as I exclaimed:

"I feel as if we had lived through this scene in some pre-existence! I have seen you playing with your dolls before—I knew what you were going to say."

"Can't you make it prophetic?" he asked, smiling. "The past is

dead, but if I could believe I should be sitting here with you next Christmas, I could bless your premonitions."

"Tell me seriously," I said, "haven't you ever had that sensation of prescience, apart from memory, which makes you suspect the life of your spirit has been more varied than the life of your body? It is always in connection with something trivial."

"With me, for instance?" he said, highly amused; but seeing that I was in earnest he fell into my humor. "You mean that trick of the mind where you feel the scene before you to be the exact duplication of a previous experience? We are told its solution lies in the fact that the two hemispheres of the brain have failed to receive their impressions in perfect unison, and the infinitesimal lapse is noted, but not mentally understood."

"That does not account for my knowing what you were going to say," I objected.

"Ah! that was telepathy," he answered, fixing his laughing eyes on mine. "Make yourself a medium once more and read all the thoughts of my heart that you have forbidden me to speak."

"I might see what would pain me," I said.

"You would see many things which you guess but too well—three words embrace them all."

"Don't say them!" I cried impulsively, stretching out my hand as if to ward off a blow.

The gesture knocked down the topmost lady in his acrobatic pyramid. Down she came, striking her china head against the marble base of the inkstand and cracking her empty noddle in two.

"The hemispheres of *her* brain must have received a united impression," I said frivolously, in the hope of steering the conversation into safer channels.

But Mr. Sinclair did not respond. He was absently fitting the broken pieces of china together.

"You expect too much of me, Mrs. Eliot," he said, with a break in his voice. "There is a limit to repression."

"There must be none as between you and me," I answered firmly.

"And yet at times I could swear you like me," he persisted.

"We have only a week to be together," I said, putting aside his remark, "let it hold no regrets."

"Upon my word, I don't understand you!" he answered. And I didn't believe he did!

It was but another proof of how far apart were his standards and mine.

Fearing a renewal of the conversation, I rang for Jane, declaring that a day in town had made me too sleepy to dress any more dolls that night.

When she came Mr. Sinclair pointed to the broken doll.

"I have cracked this lady's skull," he said, "but I will mend it by a contribution to your Christmas-tree if you will bring me a leather notebook from my dressing-table."

"Shut Mr. Sinclair's window," I called after her, "I feel a draught."

In a moment she rushed back to us, panting with fright.

"I shut it on a man's hand," she gasped. "He was trying to get in—I know he was!"

"It was probably Flinders trying to shut it from the outside," Mr. Sinclair said reassuringly. "Will you see whether he is in the kitchen?"

"Oh Mr. Sinclair, dear, don't be askin' me," she pleaded. "I wouldn't cross that hall and thim passages for all the money in your wallet," and she laid it with shaking hands beside him. I had already rung for the butler, who stood at the door waiting.

"Jane thinks she has seen a man trying to break into the house through the spare-room window," I explained. "Telephone to the stable and get the men from there to go with you and make a thorough search of the grounds. Is Mr. Sinclair's man in the kitchen?"

It appeared he had been there all the evening, so the theory that it was he trying to shut the window from the outside was destroyed.

I began gathering up my work, but I had no intention of going upstairs until the men had returned to report.

Mr. Sinclair made his contribution to Jane as calmly as if nothing had happened. She received it like one in a dream. He opened the inner pocket of his notebook, and drawing out a miniature in a flat gold frame he laid it before me.

"I am glad," he said, "Jane's visitor did not help himself to this."

I forgot my fright in my interest in the portrait. At last, I thought, I am to see *her*, and I forced my unwilling eyes to scan the miniature. But the face was a replica of Mr. Sinclair's own, only a feminine replica, delicate and girlish, with the hair arranged closer to the head than it is worn at present.

"Your sister?" I asked, for the family likeness was unmistakable.

"My mother," he answered. "She died when I was a child. I have no sister."

"It is a very charming face," I said, holding it under the lamp-light, "with the same eyes and frank smile as her great Hercules of a son. How she must have wanted to stay with you, poor lady! I know of no sadder fate than to be taken from your dear ones when you know they need you."

A wave of emotion passed over me. I felt as if the girl in the por-

trait were asking something of me which I was withholding. A few moments ago I had been angry, or supposed myself so—now I was all gentleness.

"Promise to keep Flinders on your sofa to-night," I said, placing the picture in his hand. "Remember how helpless you are still, and do it to please me."

He glanced at his own long legs and laughed.

"I'm not exactly a boy," he said, "and my pistols have done me a good turn before now."

My scouting party returned to say they had found no traces of an intruder, though that was hardly strange, as the ground was frozen hard.

I kept waking up at intervals during the early part of the night, the agitations of the evening proving stronger than the fatigues of the day. Once I thought I heard a footstep outside my door, and opening it stealthily I saw Flinders solemnly patrolling the house. He didn't see me, for he was at the far end of his beat with his back turned, but I knew who had placed him there, and with a glow of gratitude I went back to my bed and slept till morning.

VII.

ELEVEN o'clock had struck when I waked up. It was one of those glorious winter days, clear as crystal, with a sharp west wind. Jane threw open my windows as I was about to leave the room and I stopped to enjoy a long draught of the fresh air; it was exhilarating, like champagne.

The week of cold weather had frozen over the river and the ice-boats were flying hither and thither, their white sails catching the sunlight and their gay pennons floating. Between me and the Hudson was only a stretch of lawn dotted with great, sad pine-trees. The property lay high above the level of the river, so that the railway on its bank was practically non-existent. To the south of the house lay the garden, planned with a formality which mocked the efforts of nature.

As I took in the details I called for my coat and hat, determined to brace my nerves by a quick walk, and bounding down the steps I made my way to the garden, wishing to see the progress of some repairs I was making to the roof of the greenhouse.

Coming upon its broad walks from a screen of arbor-vitæ hedge, I nearly fell over Mr. Sinclair, who was approaching me in his chair, wheeled by the untiring Flinders. It was his first outing, and I hastened to offer my congratulations.

I felt wickedly happy. His silent care of me the night before had given me keenest pleasure. I was a lonely creature, and childish in

spite of an assumed gravity of manner, and I missed the shelter of a protecting love such as Tom had given. If Mr. Sinclair had had the right to win my affections, he could not have chosen a way more likely to touch me.

His indifference to the cold was surprising. A woman housed for seven weeks would be wrapped in furs and tied up with veils on the occasion of her first outing, but my invalid, while he had thrown a rug over his legs, had only supplemented his house-dress by an ordinary summer overcoat, and was enjoying his cigarette in the sharp wind as if a May sun were streaming down upon him.

Walking beside his chair I traversed all the garden alleys, and finding him interested in my hobby, I made the beds glow with summer flowers. That little bank against the sunny side of the greenhouse was the first to wake up in the spring—crocuses, lilac and white and yellow, were in bloom almost as soon as their little, pointed noses broke through the ground. Then came the daffodils and tulips, over there in those beds by the sundial, and I was just going to make an expanse of black mould burst into a blush of pink peonies when Lauretta and Charlie Johnstone joined us from behind the grapery.

Charlie had one arm thrust through the handle of a basket and his hands in his pocket to keep them warm. He looked important, but at the same time rather cast down.

Lauretta seemed radiantly happy, and it was a happiness which lifted her above her usual kittenish deportment.

I knew the truth the moment my eyes lit upon them, and wondered whether she would tell me. After the usual greetings she gave me the opportunity of seeing her alone.

"Susan," she said, "Aunt Tilly begs some flowers for the table to-night; our roses are doing so poorly this winter."

"Come," I said, "we shall find Allen somewhere in the green-houses. We may leave Mr. Johnstone to explain the iceboats to Mr. Sinclair."

Charlie looked a shade more dismal, but acquiesced.

When we were shut in among the palms Lauretta flung herself into my arms.

"Can you guess, Susan?" she asked.

"Naturally, my dear, for I have seen it coming," I answered, "and I am as happy as if you were my own little sister."

She rubbed her cheek against mine and tears stood in her eyes.

"He says I can make him happy, but that he has been through awful trials and disappointments, and if I find him world-weary and morose at times I must bear with him, and by and by my love and fresh young spirits will charm him back to happiness. What do you suppose his trials have been, Susan?" she asked anxiously.

"Fluctuations in his securities and vexation with his mother because she wouldn't let him go into the army," I answered so glibly that I feared the father of lies must be lurking at my elbow.

It was abominable in Charlie to throw a shadow over the child's happiness with his absurd posing. As long as he meant to marry her, why couldn't he do it handsomely? I determined to let him know my views later.

"Did it happen last evening?" I asked.

"Just when you said it would," she responded, "when Aunt Tilly was asleep after dinner,—and, Susan, I wish Aunt Tilly were a little more collected when she wakes up. She called out suddenly that if Thomas's wife had any more babies, instead of advancing his wages five dollars for every child, she meant to cut them down. Now, I'm not squeamish, but——"

At this point old Allen presented himself, and he and Lauretta were so busy choosing blossoms that I left them and wandered back into the garden.

Mr. Sinclair had gone to see his automobile, which had been thoroughly resuscitated and was fit to ravage the country with the best of them.

Charlie was walking up and down by himself.

"I congratulate you," I said.

He cast a gloomy glance at me and drew in his breath.

"I don't think you are behaving very nicely," I said. "You have asked a girl you sincerely like to marry you and you know she adores you, and yet you are willing to let her see that you are less happy than she. Where is your chivalry?"

"I consider marriage a subject for grave reflection," he answered.

"Reflect when you are alone," I laughed, "but when you are with her do try to be '*someways gay*,' as Jane would say."

A sigh was his only answer, but my words had some effect, for when Lauretta joined us he begged a buttonhole from her basket and gallantly kissed the little fingers which pinned it in place.

"Till eight this evening," cried Lauretta, waving good-by, and I answered,—

"I shall be very gorgeous to please Aunt Tilly."

I resolved to dress early, so as to sit with Mr. Sinclair through part of his dinner, as we dined at Rookwood half an hour earlier than the hour set by Mrs. Tobin for her entertainment. I decided to wear black net, but it was so worked over with silver and shimmering with paillettes that it was more effective than the most brilliant color. Jane sewed jewels thickly on my bodice and I wore a diamond collar, a diamond tiara, and a string of pearls which reached to my waist. If I had

owned anything more I should have put it on somewhere without respect to suitableness, just to please Mrs. Tobin.

I sent Jane on an errand and rouged my pale cheeks while she was gone, and I liked the effect. Would Mr. Sinclair like it too?

He was already enjoying his soup when I joined him, and the vision could not have been disappointing, for he gave his chair a shove which brought him facing me, so that he could take in my full effect, while he exclaimed,—

"You are simply stunning, most beautiful lady!" and then he flushed as if the surprise had agitated him.

I wondered whether he had never found me handsome before. For so virile a person he had very little control of his complexion—but then he was still an invalid, and bodily weakness plays strange pranks with the strongest.

The servant had been out of the room during my entrance; he now reappeared, drew out my chair for me, and solemnly returned Mr. Sinclair to his soup. It was as if we were two badly behaved children at nursery tea being brought to a sense of our shortcomings.

Mr. Sinclair's eyes wandered over my jewels with a troubled look, and he ventured to express the hope that I meant to take two men on the box when I drove to Tobin Towers.

"Of course not," I answered. "Who is going to molest me here in the country? Jane's bugaboo has made you nervous."

He apparently acquiesced, but must have given secret orders when I went into the drawing-room for Jane to put on my wraps, for as I came out of the front door the ubiquitous Flinders was standing beside the carriage, and having put me in he promptly mounted the box beside the coachman.

I need hardly mention that we met nothing on the road,—not as much as a strange cat,—and I might have hung diamond necklaces around the horses' necks with impunity as far as thieves were concerned; still, if Mr. Sinclair liked to take care of me, I did not find it in my heart to object.

I was the last to enter the drawing-room. Such a goodly company as I found assembled was rare for Steeplands in the winter, but Christmas was only two days off, and many of our neighbors had opened their houses for that week.

Aunt Tilly was easily queen of the ball. Her purple-velvet gown stretched for a yard over the carpet as she stood near the door receiving her guests. The skirt opened up the front just enough to reveal a white satin petticoat embroidered with a vine, on whose branches birds of paradise and passion-flowers were perched in impartial distribution. The low bodice was partly filled up with priceless lace, and sleeves of the same covered her arms to the elbows. Three lilac feathers, stuck in

what looked like a count's crown, surmounted her Assyrian curls, and her neck was in layers of wrinkles and diamond chains.

Lauretta, beautifully dressed, plump, pretty, and sprightly, was doing her duty among the guests. Charlie Johnstone had just been introduced by Mrs. Tobin to the great man of the neighborhood with so much ceremony that he might have mistrusted the good lady of having personal designs upon the young man.

As we filed out of the parlor on our way to dinner—a company of eighteen—I thought Mr. Tobin looked peculiarly revengeful from his frame. I wondered whether he regretted so much squandering of his money on the part of his Mathilda.

I was seated between the Rector and the great man, and very creditably did I talk parish with one and amateur farming with the other—Swiss cattle, ensilage, the comparative merits of Tamworth pigs as opposed to Berkshires—all such burning questions of expediency did we ponder with our fish and wash down with our champagne. Once during a pause in the conversation I heard the gentleman on Mrs. Tobin's left describing an attempt which had been made the night before to break into his house, and, indifferent alike to the claims of good manners and the farmyard, I leaned forward to listen.

"They forced the pantry window," he was saying, "and one of them must have cut himself, for there were bloody hand-prints over the white paint, and the strange part is the burglar must have lost a finger, as the left-hand mark always consisted in three fingers and a thumb."

A strange servant was in the act of handing me the terrapin. His fingers closed convulsively on the side of the dish and the contents were divided between the great man's shoulder and my gown. Mrs. Tobin's butler came to our relief, and we were scraped and mopped and the stranger's awkwardness excused in mumbled sentences by old Gilbert.

"I got him from the village to-day, Mum," he whispered in my ear, "and a poor selection he was, but Sherry only sent up three men when I needed four, and that was why I took him."

The accident had not surprised me, for as I turned to help myself to the terrapin I had noticed the hand that held the dish had lost a finger. Still, I could not disturb the harmony of the dinner upon the strength of a coincidence.

Aunt Tilly was shaking with fright.

"Mercy me! it would kill Lauretta and I if they came here," she was saying. "I can remember in Mr. Tobin's time that once we thought we heard a burglar, and he fired three shots out of the window and killed our neighbor's old white cow that had got loose and wandered into our place, and we had a suit brought against us for fifty dollars."

"You must not let this alarm you," the gentleman said reassuringly.

"I have sent to town for detectives and we are having the railway stations watched, so that a thief known to the police will have small chance to board a train."

I looked round the room to see whether the servant with the disfigured hand was within earshot, but he had not appeared since the terrapin incident. Probably Gilbert had set him tasks in the pantry more within his capacity; perhaps some of Uncle Tobin's spoons and forks were even now sliding down the thievish pockets. No wonder the poor gentleman looked so glum!

While the men were smoking and we women were sipping our coffee about the drawing-room fire like an admiring harem at Mr. Tobin's feet, Aunt Tilly retailed to us every word her neighbor had told her at dinner, which so fired the ladies that no one seemed to have been without a burglar experience of the most serious sort. At that moment the object of my suspicion entered with liqueurs on a tray. Most of us declined, but the wife of the great man having confessed to a weakness for green mint, Aunt Tilly's good manners induced her to keep her company in a glass. The servant's back was towards me as he handed the tray to Mrs. Tobin, but I could see that he stood very close to her, and I heard her say,—

"You have caught the foot of your tray in my lace; be careful or you will tear it."

It took a minute to disengage the silver claw from the frill of her corsage, and Aunt Tilly examined a hole rent in her beautiful lace with dismay. Suddenly she exclaimed,—

"My diamond star is gone!"

We all shook our dresses and searched under sofas and chairs, and Mrs. Tobin rang the bell for Gilbert and bade him look under the dining-room table.

I could doubt no longer.

"The thief is the servant who has just served the liqueurs," I said. "Gilbert, don't let him escape."

Gilbert hurriedly left the room, only to return with the intelligence that the man was nowhere in the house.

The gentlemen were summoned in consultation, and the victim of the night before undertook to drive at once to the village to interview his detective at our station. The absence of a telephone left Aunt Tilly rather stranded in the way of communication with the outside world.

One comfort was that the man must now feel himself so marked in the neighborhood that his one idea would be escape.

Poor Mrs. Tobin was so distressed at the loss of her star and the boldness of the outrage that we felt it would be cruel to keep her play-

ing hostess any longer than was necessary, so as the clock had already struck half-past ten we bade her good-night.

As Gilbert opened the hall door for me he made a small confidence.

"He's got a-holt of a lot of the small silver, but you'd advise my not telling Mrs. Tobin till morning, wouldn't you, Mum?"

I commended his prudence, though I feared the poor old lady was likely to pass a sleepless night from grief over the loss she already knew.

VIII.

It seemed so self-evident that a man marked by a physical defect and already associated with two burglaries should seek safety in flight that I never gave him a second thought beyond reproaching myself for concealing my suspicions till after he had escaped with Aunt Tilly's diamond star. I went to sleep with a feeling of responsibility towards the poor old soul which quite distressed me.

It could not have been much after one o'clock when I woke up with my heart racing. I am sure external impressions act directly on the nerve-centres without waiting to be communicated through the brain, for I was too sleepy to understand my own terror. The incidents of the evening flashed through my mind as I struggled back to consciousness, and I opened my eyes to see a dull light on my dressing-table and a man's figure bending over it. I kept perfectly still, but I verily believe he heard my heart beating, for he suddenly turned and our eyes met.

"Don't scream," he whispered, making a dash for my bed and pointing his pistol at me.

I tried to slip my hand quietly to the electric alarm, which hung near my pillow, but he detected the movement and ordered me to "drop it."

"Where are your jewels?" he asked, pressing his pistol against my temple.

"They are not in here," I answered as well as my trembling lips could frame the words.

"Speak soft," he cautioned. "Lies won't help you; speak the truth."

I plucked up my courage.

"You don't dare shoot," I said, "it would rouse the house."

"There are other ways of quieting blabs," he answered, and he raised his weapon as if he meant to strike me over the head.

He had a piece of a handkerchief over the upper half of his face with holes cut for the eyes, but I recognized the hand which held the lantern.

"I know about your jewels," he said; "get up and get them."

I lay perfectly still; I could not have moved if I had tried.

The Green Dragon

"I've got no time to fool," he whispered; "do as I tell you."

I really think I was fainting, for his words came to me as from a distance and they did not seem to matter. The next thing I remember was the awful sensation one has when regaining consciousness, with the added discomfort of a towel thrust into my mouth and my hands tied together. He was in the act of taking the lamp out of his lantern.

"We'll try a little persuading," he said, and touched my wrist with the flame.

I writhed away from him and he laughed. The fiendishness of his laugh and the sting of the burn made me furious. My strength came back with a bound, but he had me at his mercy.

"If I loose your hands, will you get the things?" he asked.

I nodded. After all, what did a few baubles matter? If I should succeed in getting help, it might only lead to some one losing their life for the sake of the stones.

He cut the twine and let my hands go, at the same time ordering me not to touch the gag in my mouth. I got out of bed and put on my dressing-gown and slippers—even in supreme moments habits assert themselves.

"Well, you're a cool hand!" he remarked. "You top-flyers beat the Dutch!"

I walked to my bureau drawer, took out the key to my little safe, and then opened the door of the next room, which had been a dressing-room and where the safe was built inside a closet.

The action excited his suspicions, for once more I felt the pistol close to my head, but my burglar was soon convinced of my sincerity, and together we approached the closet.

I unlocked the safe and drew out the little drawers with their sparkling contents. He thrust the different things into his pockets and seemed pretty well satisfied with his night's work, when suddenly his memory played me a shabby trick; Jane must have forgotten to put away my pearls, for they were not there, and he demanded them.

"I have heard," he said,—too prudent to admit he had *seen*,—"that you have pearls. Hand them over."

I spread out my hands to explain in dumb show that I did not know where they were.

"Come now," he said, "none of that!" and raising his revolver, he dealt me a blow on the shoulder that made me reel. At that instant a pistol-shot rang through the room and the man's arm dropped helpless by his side, while Mr. Sinclair wrenched his weapon from him and pitched him into a corner with as little effort as if he had been a kitten.

Could I believe my senses? I had supposed Mr. Sinclair unable to take a step, and here he was, limping but able-bodied, complete master of the situation.

He hardly glanced at the human heap in the corner, but tore away the bandage from my mouth and entreated me to assure him that I was unhurt. The hand he laid upon my shoulder was shaking with excitement and rage.

I truthfully answered that no bones were broken, and proceeded to give ocular proof of the same by dashing away from him at the top of my speed. I had seen the thief taking advantage of Mr. Sinclair's momentary thought of me to regain his feet, and he was just preparing to glide softly along the wall in the direction of my door.

I guessed his intention. It was probably the blast of icy air which guided me, but it seemed to me like instinct. I *knew* I should find the bathroom window open and a ladder resting against it. In a second I had crossed my bedroom and discovered just what I expected. For once my wits were quick. Seizing the ladder by its upright, I tossed it to the ground and turned to face the thief, who was close upon me.

It was my turn to laugh.

He cursed me with a savagery which was frightful, but he saw he was circumvented, and, weak from pain and loss of blood, he sank into a chair and resigned himself to his fate. The only outlet from the bathroom was the door by which we had entered, and that was already blocked by Mr. Sinclair and his pistol.

I set every bell in the house ringing, and in response collected a group of frightened servants nearly as bizarre in costume as Lauretta's friends in the cake-walk.

Jane was the first to arrive, with a down quilt billowing about her little person.

"Was you dreamin' of snakes or Indians, darlint?" she asked, running to me.

Twenty years ago I had suffered equally from their pursuit in the miseries of childish nightmare.

I pointed to the bathroom, where Mr. Sinclair was guarding his prisoner. Jane looked from him to me with blank unbelief.

"Did the Holy Saints give him wings that he *upped* the stairs with that poor leg of him?" she asked.

Here the butler and Flinders joined us and we held a council of war. We decided that Flinders should be dispatched in the automobile to summon the constable from the village and the New York detective if he could be found, and he was further instructed to pick up Doctor Gale on his way back, for humanity demanded that the burglar's arm should be attended to, and I, myself, was suffering acutely from the burn on my wrist, though, so far, I had been able to conceal the injury.

The constable, being a family man, preferred his own horse and wagon to the fiery risks of the automobile, but the town detective scorned such pusillanimity; in the hunting down of his professional

game he would have bestridden the back of a flesh-and-blood dragon if it would have engaged to get him first on the scene.

It was not till the excitement of the night was over, the stolen property recovered, the wounds dressed, and the burglar taken by his guardians to the county jail, that I heard Mr. Sinclair's part of the story. He and I were sitting with Doctor Gale in the library while the latter enjoyed a cup of hot coffee before braving the early morning air when I asked my guest to explain his timely arrival in the dressing-room.

He said that the night before Flinders had found under the window where Jane had surprised the man a burglar's tool, which from the delicacy of its make could only have belonged to a professional, and while they had not wished to alarm me, they had felt reasonably sure the man meant business. The first night he had kept Flinders on guard, and the second night he meant to watch himself, but he must have fallen into a doze. Some outside noise waked him and he quietly unbarred the inside shutters of his room and looked out. The stars were shining brilliantly, and he saw a ladder such as the men had been using to mend the roof of the greenhouse propped up against the window of the room above him. To get his pistols and put on some clothes took a few minutes, for his movements on a level floor were still difficult, but how to mount the staircase was much more of a puzzle. He finally straddled the banister, so that part of his weight should be supported, and by using his arms to drag himself and his good leg to take the steps he got silently to the top. He had at first chanced upon the wrong room, but on opening what afterwards proved to be my door he saw a light shining through from the dressing-room beyond, and came upon us just as the brute struck me with his pistol. Mr. Sinclair lost all control of himself and fired before he knew he was pulling the trigger. In my heart I was glad, for he must have been far too much exhausted to stand any chance in a hand-to-hand fight with that desperate rogue. Not that he seemed much exhausted when he slung the poor wretch into the corner! Still, when I considered that a week ago we looked upon his few steps about his room and his scramble in his wheeled chair as a grand advance, this performance seemed little short of a miracle. I feared it might have done him some injury, and I begged Doctor Gale not to go away without making sure that all was well. But he laughed at my misgivings.

"His muscles are like iron," he assured me. "You ought to see him sitting in the middle of his room smashing about like a blacksmith with those dumb-bells he uses."

"He may have injured his hip all the same," I persisted.

"He is a sound man, I tell you," the Doctor insisted, completely ignoring Mr. Sinclair's presence, "and that hip is every bit as good

as the other, and he can walk as well as anyone when he chooses!"—here I thought Doctor Gale looked a bit roguish. "All he needs now is to get rid of the stiffness and to find a strong motive to get well. Why, in a fortnight I'll give him leave to walk from here to San Francisco."

I thought Mr. Sinclair looked annoyed. Did he too suspect a lurking innuendo in the Doctor's speech—a hint that he had been willing to prolong convalescence? Well, and if he had, whose business was it but his and mine and perhaps Mrs. Sinclair's? These old country doctors need polish.

The lamps were burning low; it was nearly daylight. I lit a pair of candles, hoping the Doctor would take note of the time and go home, as long as his professional duties were over. I wanted one word alone with Mr. Sinclair, one word of thanks for what he had done for me; but my old friend had his own plans. He poured out a second cup of coffee and waved the nose of the cream-jug in the direction of the stairs while he addressed me.

"Go to bed, Ladybird, and when you are nicely tucked in send Jane down for me and I shall give you a sleeping-draught which will keep your nerves quiet till dinner-time to-morrow."

"I cannot spare the time," I objected. "It is the day before Christmas, and I have a thousand things to do."

"At what age do women learn obedience?" he asked with a stony stare.

"From their cradles, Heaven help them!" I answered, knowing I might as well submit.

When I got to the door I fired a parting shot.

"Among domestic tyrants," I said, "the family physician holds the palm!"

IX.

HE knew better than I, dear Doctor Gale, for when I awoke late in the afternoon I was simply good for nothing. My wrist too was painful, and I gladly followed Jane's suggestion of having toast and tea by my bedroom fire instead of dressing and going down to dinner. This quiescence on my part was the strongest proof of collapsed nerves I could have given, for I had never thanked Mr. Sinclair as I accounted thanks (i.e., with emotion), and I was wasting these precious last days of his sojourn at Rookwood.

At about seven o'clock—the time when he usually came to the library to read the evening papers before dinner—I sent Jane down with a note. Perhaps it said less than was necessary, though it seemed to me a model of grateful propriety. However, the appropriateness of a letter lies chiefly in the mood of him that reads. She brought me back an answer:

The Green Dragon

"Didn't somebody, historically famous, say of himself that his letters were powerful, but his bodily presence weak and his speech contemptible? Well, it's just the reverse with you. Your bodily presence is adorable, your speech bewitching, but your letters are like an old maid's sermon. I repudiate them. Get well and come downstairs, for my days are numbered. Mopsie has arrived in New York—in secret, for fear a cable from me might have stopped her—and I fancy she will be here to-morrow. Will it be convenient for you to receive her?"

The telegram from Mrs. Sinclair was enclosed. It said:

"I am here at the Albemarle, and shall join you the moment I have recovered from the severity of the voyage.

"M. H. S."

I sent back a line to this ardent husband:

"I shall telegraph to Mrs. Sinclair this evening to ask her to make this house her headquarters while she is in America."

His answer read:

"MY DEAR LADY: You are too kind!

"H. S."

Now, what did he mean! Was he literal or simply enthusiastic? Was I too kind to be satisfactory to him, or was I kind in a very great degree?

I hope he spent a wretched evening. I know I did, but I felt myself exemplary in conduct, and that was supporting.

There were no excitements that Christmas vigil. The household, worn out by the agitations of the night before, slept profoundly, but I, having exhausted my sleeping powers during the day, heard the clock strike every hour, and, like the Psalmist, I could have roared for the very disquietness of my heart. Again and again I examined my conduct, and while outwardly it was irreproachable, inwardly it was weak and culpable. Worse than all, I feared my infatuation was no longer my own horrid secret. Doctor Gale had been very peculiar in his manner the night before, as if, feeling himself responsible for bringing me into temptation, he was doing his best to protect me. When the mind transforms itself into a turnspit, its poor little legs give out at last. Towards morning I slept, and when I awoke I had barely time to dress for church.

Having swallowed a cup of coffee, I was hurrying out of the house when I met Flinders.

"Tell Mr. Sinclair," I said, "that the carriage will take me to

church, and then await his orders in case he should wish to send to the station for Mrs. Sinclair."

He had orders to go for Mrs. Sinclair in the automobile, he informed me.

"Then you know she is coming. Mr. Sinclair has heard definitely?" I asked.

"At noon, Ma'am."

"Won't she be afraid to use the automobile?" I asked, knowing my own terrors.

"Not if Mr. Sinclair desires that she should," he answered, as if that settled the matter.

This was too much submission to suit my taste. I judged the lady to be rather a poor creature, and yet such an estimate accorded ill with Mr. Sinclair's description. He said she shared her empire with no one. Ah, well! I should know soon.

I found the Christmas services very soothing to my rasped spirit, and at the end I loitered down the aisle admiring the church, more beautiful than ever in its greenery, and (to say the truth) I was not unwilling to escape the chatter of empty greetings. Aunt Tilly and the Rector were waiting for me, however. The clerical toilet is quickly made, it is like an immortal putting on mortality to see your spiritual guide one moment in surplice and stole and embroidery and the next in a fur-lined overcoat and dogskin gloves. He was in attendance upon Mrs. Tobin, with whom he had promised to lunch. She put her arm in mine.

"Isn't it a good thing my diamond star is safe?" she burst out in the gratitude of an overflowing heart. "If it hadn't have been found I declare I could not have looked at that Star-in-the-East hanging from the chancel arch. It would have seemed like a mockery!"

The Rector was on my other side.

"There's encouragement for symbolism!" I said.

He tried to look shocked, but a sense of the ludicrous saved him.

"I wish you would have your people hunt about your grounds where my silver was found; a dessert fork and a salt spoon are missing." Here she turned to the Rector. "They found my silver tied on his bicycle hidden in a bush, and my star he had in the lining of his coat. Susan," she exclaimed, "you don't know much about that valet of Mr. Sinclair's, do you?"

As usual, not a word of sympathy for the trying experience I had been through, not a thought about the day—nothing but rejoicing over her recovered ornament, followed by low-minded suspicions of innocent people. She was the type of all that was small and narrow and mean in the old-fashioned lady, and yet underneath there was a kind heart and a sense of personal dignity which commanded respect. Though she vexed me, I was fond of her.

The landau was waiting for her and the Rector,—“for the Rector and I,” she would have said,—Lauretta having elected to walk home with her young man. Mrs. Tobin offered to give me a lift, for I too had decided to go home on foot.

“You can drive with me as far as my gate,” she said condescendingly, “and after that it isn’t much of a walk. I would send you all the way home, but Thomas wants his dinner.”

Certainly Thomas was looking like a thunder-gust on the box.

“It would be a pity to inconvenience him,” I answered meekly, “and I really prefer my own feet—and company,” I added sotto voce to the Rector.

Again he struggled with a smile.

Off they rattled at a snail’s pace and I started for home, keeping my distance behind the lovers.

They were, of course, well behaved on the public road, but no one could have mistaken their relations to each other. Their conversation was so earnest, and sometimes they came to a standstill and exchanged long looks, and sometimes Lauretta flitted ahead and the dignified Charlie actually shook himself into a run to overtake her. As they neared their own property I permitted myself to join them.

“Mrs. Eliot,” Charlie began, “I wish you would reason with Lauretta. I want to be married next month and go to Aiken, and she says it is unfair to leave Mrs. Tobin in the middle of winter and that she won’t be married till the spring.”

“Why don’t you try to oblige the gentleman when he asks so prettily?” I said reprovingly.

Happiness had given our little paroquet a soul. Her eyes filled with tears as she answered:

“Aunt Tilly is so feeble, Susan, and she will be lonely when I go. I ought to see her through the winter.”

“Hasn’t Mrs. Tobin plans of her own?” I asked, feeling sure the problem of her own comfort had received due reflection.

“Of course she has,” broke in Charlie. “She means to visit my mother when we are married, and then Doctor Gale is going to live with her as soon as he can dispose of his own house.”

So this was to be my old friend’s reward for his life spent in the service of others—Aunt Tilly’s sole companionship at the last! Still, there were extenuating circumstances; her housekeeping was better than his, and as he and Lauretta were her only heirs, he might as well take up his duties at Tobin Towers sooner as later. I even wondered whether she might not be induced to leave him everything for his life, now that Lauretta was so amply provided for, except that I knew no mortal brave enough to broach the subject of her will to Uncle Tobin’s relict. Overfeeding and no exercise had made her as pop-eyed and

apoplectic as an old Blenheim spaniel, and her husband's lonely waiting on the other side of the Great Ferry might not be much prolonged.

I threw the weight of my influence on the side of a speedy marriage.

"Dear child," I said, "take your happiness when it comes. I will do all an outsider can to fill your place, and remember, you are bringing a new interest into Aunt Tilly's life rather than taking one out."

Lauretta kissed me and sighed gently, but I knew by the time they had reached the front door Charlie would have won her to his way of thinking.

It was one o'clock when I reached home, and hurrying upstairs to take off my things I encountered Jane coming out of the room I had had prepared for Mrs. Sinclair.

"Has Mrs. Sinclair arrived?" I asked with a tightening of the heartstrings.

Jane nodded portentously, and followed me into my room to furnish me with every particular while she put away my coat and hat.

"She do be tall," she said, "and she's a chalky color in the cheeks and she squints the eyes of her when she looks close at things. I should say"—here Jane assumed the air of a connoisseur—"that she was just sickly enough to have a very ladylike appearance, but she's not near so pretty as Mr. Sinclair, and in my *opeenion* she's older nor him," and Jane wagged her head in regret at his choice.

Having brought me my slippers and picked up my discarded walking-boots, she put the finishing touch to her description.

"Her clothes bees of the best, and Flinders speaks very respectful of her."

"Ask Mrs. Sinclair to join me in the drawing-room when she is ready," I said as I left the room.

Almost at once she came—a delicate, intense-looking person with short-sighted eyes. She must have been handsome, and had still the remains of beauty in spite of ill health.

I welcomed her with more warmth than I felt.

"Our debt of gratitude is already so large," she said, retaining my hand, "that I hesitated about accepting your kind invitation to stay with you, but it seemed the only way in which I could see Harrington satisfactorily."

"I had hoped you would bring your little daughter," I responded. "Is she in New York?"

She fixed her strange eyes on my face with a puzzled look.

"You mean Dolly?" she said. "I left her with her governess on the other side, but she is not my daughter. She is Harry's child."

"Didn't she want to see her father?" I pursued, curiosity getting the best of manners.

"She couldn't very well see him, as he is still in California," she answered.

"Then her father is not *my* Mr. Sinclair!" I exclaimed, forgetting all prudence in my excitement.

"*Your* Mr. Sinclair," she said with a slightly sarcastic accent, "we call Tony in the family. Harry is Henry Sinclair, his brother."

I felt the color rush to my cheeks and back to my heart. Perhaps I had made a mistake about more people than Dolly, but I was too much agitated to puzzle it out. My nerves were hardly recovered from the shock of two nights ago, and my long walk had exhausted me more than I knew.

Mrs. Sinclair was speaking, and I pulled myself together to take in what she said.

"As we are on the subject of Harrington's family, may I ask"—and her manner grew stern and forbidding—"why no one thought it worth while to tell either Harry or me how seriously he was hurt?"

My spirit rose.

"Really," I said, "I could hardly make myself the judge of what a stranger in my house considered his obligations to his own wife and brother."

The look of anger faded out of her eyes and suppressed amusement took its place.

"Did Harrington tell you about his wife and brother?" she asked.

"Either he or Flinders," I said, searching my memory. "I think it was Flinders who told Jane when Mr. Sinclair was first carried in after the accident; but you may remember I wrote to you for him, so I could not help knowing."

"Look at me," she said. "Do I look like Harrington's wife?"

"Then who are you?" I said, approaching her, my cheeks as chalky as her own.

"I'm his stepmother," she said, with a peal of laughter, putting her hand on my arm, while I—I am ashamed to write it—I quietly slipped fainting to the floor.

That woman is an honor to her sex. She locked the doors till she had brought me to myself, and from that day to this she has never told a creature of my silent but shameful confession.

When I sat up she pointed to my bandaged wrist.

"I am so distressed to have hurt you," she said. "I must have touched your injured arm."

I fancy it was really the other arm she had touched, but it served to restore me to self-respect.

X.

A GREAT shyness stood between me and my future intercourse with Mr. Sinclair. I fancied his stepmother would tell him of my absurd

hallucination in regard to his marriage, and I wondered how my conduct would strike him from that point of view. At all events, he would understand that I had refused to listen to him under a misapprehension, and any opening I gave him now would be like an invitation to renew his pose as lover. My pride flamed at the thought. I should never give him the opportunity.

I therefore took refuge under Mrs. Sinclair's wing and hardly allowed the poor lady to leave me for a moment. She would have proved a delightful companion under any circumstances, but now that I wished to avoid tête-à-têtes with her stepson, she was doubly welcome. We gave him much of our society, but we also took many walks and drives together and got to know each other with an intimacy which years of town life could not have accomplished.

From time to time she told me of their past life. She had married the elder Mr. Harrington Sinclair when his sons were just growing into manhood, and had found herself welcomed into the family by Tony in a way which had won her deepest gratitude.

"He is his father over again," she said proudly,—"broad-minded, courteous, with true nobility of heart; all that has made life endurable in my widowhood I owe to him."

I longed to ask about Henry and his little girl, but it is only under stress of excitement that sometimes I forget courtesy in curiosity.

Presently she told me of her own accord.

"Harry never liked me," she went on musingly, as if to herself. "He resented his father's marrying, and our natures clashed. It was as much my fault as his. I seemed fated to show him my rough side, whereas Tony always fostered what was best in me.

"Then came Harry's marriage to a little actress he had met in California and my husband's bitter opposition, which Harry ascribed to my influence. Poor boy! I would have moved heaven and earth to save him from his fate, but he would not hear reason. His wife stayed with him till after Dolly was born, and then left him for a former lover.

"It killed my husband. His health had been delicate for some time and he felt his son's disgrace keenly. His pride was humiliated.

"Harry has forgiven me sufficiently to accept my care of Dolly, and our present relations are friendly, but it is Tony I love," she ended, fixing her eyes in close scrutiny on my face, as if she expected me to say, "And I also."

"How old is Dolly?" I ventured to ask.

"She is six," Mrs. Sinclair answered. "For six years I have tried to eradicate her mother's nature and make her what my husband would have liked his grandchild to be. That duty and Tony's kindness have done much to help me through these sad years."

We were walking along the path which overhung the river-bank. The day was cheerless and flakes of snow were beginning to fall. They were to leave me the next day—Harrington to meet his engagements in San Francisco, Mrs. Sinclair to take the returning steamer to Dolly. There was no doubt as to the depth of her adoration for her stepson when—delicate creature that she was!—she was willing to brave the Atlantic twice in one month to spend a week with him.

"How I shall miss you!" I exclaimed.

And straightway we fell to forming plans for the future. In the summer, when Tony would be yachting, I was to go to her in the Tyrol and we would do all the brave things her physician would permit; and next winter she and Dolly would spend Christmas at Rookwood, and from here we would go South to the land of "snakes and 'gators" and try what a winter in Florida would do for her health.

How I appreciated her delicacy in always leaving her son out of our plans.

As the snow fell faster, I hurried Mrs. Sinclair into the house. The short December day was nearly over and the fireside and tea-tray presented stronger attractions than the leaden-hued landscape.

We came in, stamping the snow from our feet and shaking our garments, and Mr. Sinclair limped into the hall to meet us. As he helped Mopsie off with her coat I thought he murmured something in her ear, but I am apt to be fanciful.

"Give Mopsie her tea at once," he begged, "even if it is not properly drawn yet. We must not let her take cold in these Highland snowstorms."

The influence this great creature had with us women was remarkable. Poor Mrs. Sinclair swallowed her scalding hot water, which disgraced the name of tea, and saying that Harrington feared she might be overtired, went upstairs to lie down.

As the door closed behind her he turned to me.

"Have you bribed Mopsie never to leave you alone with me for a minute?" he asked reproachfully.

"It would be a waste of diplomacy when a word from you can destroy the most carefully laid plans," I said, carrying the war into his quarters.

"Yes," he owned boldly, "I did ask her to leave us. I have a great many things to say to you, and the time is short."

He sighed uneasily and, getting up, dragged his chair close to mine, where I sat beside the tea-tray.

"Mrs. Eliot, you didn't believe Doctor Gale the other night when he insinuated that I had been 'playing 'possum' about being able to walk—now, did you? I give you my word that I surprised myself more than I did you. It was the excitement and my fears for your

safety that gave me a power over my muscles which seemed like a miracle. You can't imagine what I suffered till I got to you that night."

"You need not ask for my good opinion," I said in a low voice. "You know it is always yours."

"All the same, it was an impertinence on the part of that old gentleman which I felt like resenting at the time, but it was awkward to discuss it with him."

"Forgive him, now that you are going away, and try to think kindly of all of us," and my eyes said more than my tongue.

"Think kindly," he repeated. "I feel as if all thought were merged in a great flood of love and gratitude to you. I have obeyed you and kept silence as long as disobedience could endanger our relations, but now that I am going away I shall say what I please. I love you with my whole heart and soul, and I shall never give over trying to win you till somebody else proves it impossible to me."

He had risen in his excitement and stood looking down at me with a world of tenderness in his face. I could have flung myself into his arms, but shame held me back.

"Stop," I said, also rising and facing him. "I do love you, but my love has been a crime. I do not think you will like me when I have told you all."

He looked startled for a moment, and then possessed himself of both my hands as I stood abashed before him.

"I thought that you were married, and I loved you just the same. When I knew my own heart I ought to have gone away and left you,—any right-minded woman would have done so,—but I chose to stay and dally with temptation. I loved you when I thought you false to your absent wife, and it proves—oh! it proves I'm a horrid woman, Harrington!" and my head dropped on his breast.

"It proves, my darling," he returned, "that instinct is surer than knowledge,—that something in you more discerning than reason told you that I was not a cad. You are too true a woman, sweetheart, to have loved me if I had not been yours to love."

I suppose it was sophistry, but I found it very convincing.

"Then you don't despise me," I said with a sigh of relief, "you don't think my moral backbone wobbly?"

He chuckled.

"I feel as if your moral backbone had been frozen to an icy stiffness. If your sentiments have had a glow, you have kept it well hidden from me."

And so we talked on into the deepening twilight, and in the perfect happiness of the hour we even forgot that separation awaited us on the morrow.

It was not till the clock struck seven that I remembered that the tea things had never been removed nor the lights lit, and that Jane was even now waiting to help me dress for dinner.

As we parted I put a question fraught with deepest interest.

"Did Mrs. Sinclair never tell you that I thought you were married?" I could not bring myself to explain to whom.

"Never," he answered.

"Didn't she ever say anything about a conversation we had the first day she arrived?"

"Never, on my honor," he again asserted.

"I love that woman!" I said impressively.

"Mopsie's a gentleman," he said impudently.

"She's nothing of the sort," I retorted. "She is a true woman and no cat!" and I believe wings carried me upstairs, I was so happy.

Harrington proposed that he should delay his journey for a few days in order that we might be married and I should go with him, and when I absolutely refused he suggested coming back in February, but I knew I could not be happy if I did not resign my old life in the way my conscience could best approve.

I lost Rookwood and most of Tom's money in the event of a second marriage, and I wished to hand over the property to my successor in perfect order; besides, I had many of my own cherished possessions about me, and I had to arrange for their safe-keeping during the trip round the world which Tony and I were planning, so June was the time I chose,—June, when the Rookwood gardens would be gay with roses,—June, when all nature best lends itself to the delusion that life and love and joy must last forever.



THE SWIMMER

BY FULLERTON L. WALDO

THE roil and wrath of the resounding sea
Shall not o'erwhelm and drown me, blindly dumb;
For I am fighting onward till I come
Unto the haven where my heart would be.

I know a Light is shining on the shore,
And through the mountain'd and ascending sea
If I fight on, the Light will come to me,
And I unto the Light, forevermore!

FATHER KNEIPP AND HIS CURE

THROUGH AN AMERICAN PATIENT'S EYES,
WITH ANECDOTES OF EMPEROR WILLIAM

By Maud Howe



CADENABBIA, LAKE OF COMO, August 29, 1894.

I FEAR the vagabond instinct is the strongest one I have, for I was glad to leave Rome a week ago—to leave my Rome, think of it! with its galleries all to myself, and its churches, and no tourists; still, the fleas had become too vicious, and all the “lame ducks” were upon me—shabby gentlemen attached to the Vatican, seedy artists with portfolios of unsold sketches, decayed gentlewomen professing Dante and lacking pupils—for the foreign colony, by which they live, has dissolved, and we were the last Anglo-Saxons left in town except some young secretaries of the British Embassy.

Unless one has seen the Sistine Chapel at noon on a blazing August day one has not really seen it. The figure of Adam receiving the touch of Life from the Creator is, for me, the highest expression of the art of painting. The hours I spent across the way at the Vatican and St. Peter's made up for any small inconveniences of the heat I may have suffered. If one is to pass a summer in a city instead of in your green Maine woods, many-fountained Rome is the city of all others! There are no mosquitoes, the nights are cool, the citizens are too poor to go away to any perceptible extent, so there is none of that desolate feeling which makes London a Desert of Sahara in August, and Paris worse. But the heat of the last week of August drove us to the Italian Lake country, and here we are at Cadenabbia—from Ca' di Nabbia, *house of Nabby*, an old woman who once lived in a little hut, or ca', on the shore. It is one of the most beautiful places on earth.

It is before breakfast. Outside my window is the Lake of Como with its mountains. On one side there is deep purple shadow, the other palpitates with light. Soon we shall have coffee and green figs in the pergola below, under the canopy of grape-leaves. Cadenabbia is all villas and hotels; behind, half way up the hill, is the village of Griente,

to reach which we climb steep streets of steps paved with round cobbles. Griente is all gray stone, with delicious arches spanning the narrow ways. The Syndic's house stands apart; his fat wife and pretty daughter seem always to be sitting sewing before the door. The Padre, a dear old man, showed us his garden and called our attention to the trellis he had contrived for his grapes. We must taste his wine, made from these Muscats—made, I warrant, by his own hands. We did taste it and found it excellent.

Sai, Signori," he said, "*un gocciatino di vino e' buono per l'estomaco.*" "Know, Signors, that a little drop of wine is good for the stomach." St. Paul was of his way of thinking.

J. has been seized with a fury of sketching; he goes every day to Griente and draws and draws! The old women and the children make much of him. Yesterday he heard one boy say to another, "It must be very hard to paint and smoke a pipe at the same time."

"*Ma ché!*" said the other, "he only does it for bravado!"

The other day he frescoed a lad's nose with vermilion like a Cherokee brave's; since then all the boys in the district torment him for the ends of his pastels.

This is one of the prosperous provinces of Italy. The town of Como has silk manufactories, where the best Italian silk stockings are made and the nicest of the piece silks. There is a feeling of comparative *bien être*. The flood of travellers that pours through here brings a certain prosperity, though I incline to think it a specious one. Everybody asks, "What would Italy do without the tourists?" Perhaps if the people were not so busy making silly knickknacks to sell to tourists, they would pay more attention to cultivating their land. Improved agricultural methods are what Italy needs above all else; she has the finest soil and climate in Europe; she could supply half the continent with fruit, oil, and wine if she had a little more common-sense! I have seen oranges and lemons rotting under the trees at Sorrento, and in Calabria grapes used to enrich the soil! This is not because the Italians are lazy—the Italian peasants are the hardest worked people I know. They tug and toil just to put bread in their mouths; they almost never taste meat. Last Sunday afternoon at the railroad station in Rome the floor and platform were covered with sleeping peasants waiting for the train to take them to their work. Each man carried round his neck seven loaves of coarse bread strung on a piece of rope, the week's rations,—dry bread, with a "finger" of wine to moisten it if he is lucky! It is evident that they are willing to work, and yet Italy is miserably poor! Somebody is blundering somewhere, I am too rank an outsider to know who. Some foreign writers lay every ill Italy endures to the heavy taxes the government has imposed. I am not so sure that what Italy has got in the last quarter century is not worth the price she

has paid for it. There are abuses, steals, a bureaucracy, and a prodigious megalomania (swelled head), but the people are learning to read and write!

That reminds me of what I heard Sir William Vernon Harcourt say at a luncheon in Rome. Some one asked where he was staying. "I am stopping at the Hotel Royal opposite to the Ministry of Finance," he said. "Strange that Italy should have the largest finance building in the world and the smallest finances!" The folly of putting up these mammoth public buildings, these dreadful monuments to Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, Cavour, and the other great men who brought about the *Risorgimento*, is appalling; but Italy is realizing her mistakes; she is learning at an astonishing rate.

WOERISHOVEN, BAVARIA, September 20, 1894.

I have been banished by bronchitis from the Eden, Cadenabbia, and have come to Father Kneipp's Water-Cure near Munich, although it is a little late in the season to take the "cure." It is *de rigueur* before seeing Father Kneipp to consult a regular practitioner, who pronounces whether or no you are a fit subject; people with weak hearts are not allowed to take the cure. I paid a small sum, became a member of the Kneipp Verein, received a blank-book—in which the *medico* wrote out a diagnosis—and a ticket stating the hour of my appointment with "the *Pfarrer*," as Father Kneipp is called. I turned up a little before time at an immense barrack of a place like the waiting-room at a railroad station. The door to the consulting-room was guarded by two functionaries who read aloud our numbers as our turn came, looking carefully at the tickets before letting anyone enter.

"*Ein und zwanzig!*" (twenty-one), and I passed into the long room and stood before Father Kneipp, like a prisoner at the bar. He is one of the most powerful-looking men I have ever seen; his eyes pierced me through and through. I handed him the book with the diagnosis. He read it, grunted, ruminated, bored me with a second auger glance, then dictated my course of treatment to one of his secretaries, a callow *clerico* who sat beside him at a long table with three or four other men.

I found out afterwards that they were young doctors studying his methods. Father Kneipp spoke to me rather sharply, going directly to the point. Never mind what he said, I deserved it, I shall not forget it, and, like Dr. Johnson, "I think to mend!" "Come again in a fortnight," he said suddenly. The consultation was over and I was ushered out. I had not reached the door when "*Zwei und zwanzig*," a crippled boy, a far more interesting case than mine, came in.

Father Kneipp dislikes women, ladies especially, me in particular, because no one had warned me not to wear gloves, a veil, and a good

bonnet. If I had put an old shawl over my head and looked generally forlorn, he would have been kinder. Isn't that dear? His benevolence is of the aggressive type; he grudges time spent on rich people,—is only reconciled to them, in fact, because they offer up gifts in return for health, and in this way a great sanitarium has grown up where the prince is nearly as well treated as the peasant—but it is the peasant folk, his own people, that the Pfarrer loves! This is the only truly democratic community I have ever lived in,—a pure democracy governed by a benevolent despot! The despot is past seventy years old; he has an aldermanic figure, a rough peasant head, and extraordinary bristling white eyebrows, standing out a good two inches from his penthouse brows. His coloring is like an old English country squire's, brick-red skin, bright blue eyes, and silver hair. He is a prelate; so his rusty black cassock is piped with purple silk, and he wears a tiny purple skull-cap. His two inseparables were with him, a long black cigar and a white Spitz dog. . . .

The fortnight is almost up, the cough gone, the vitality come. Yesterday I went to hear one of the Father's health talks in the big, open hall, free to all. Good, practical common-sense was what he gave us, nothing new or startling,—just the wholesome advice of a very wise old man. Enthusiasm and common-sense are his weapons. After it was over we waited to see him come out. A group of bores hung on to him; one sentimentalist caught his hand and tried to kiss it, which so enraged the Pfarrer that he gave the fellow a slap!

Such people! If you could only hear them testify to their cures, like lepers and the halt in the Bible! Tell Anagnos that two blind men say they have been cured here this summer. The applications were general, not local, save bathing the eyes in warm straw water. Sounds simple, doesn't it? One had been blind four years, the other longer. Atrophy of the nerves of the eye was the trouble in both cases. The younger man was going away in despair after a few weeks' treatment. He drove to the station, got into the train; *suddenly he saw something moving*, cars going in the other direction! He got out again, returned to Woerishofen, persevered with the treatment, and now sees! A South African couple sit at my table; they have come all the way from Cape Town. For seventeen long years the husband suffered with nervous dyspepsia, whatever that may be. One summer at Woerishofen has cured him. Does this sound like Paine's Celery Compound? I learn as much from the other patients as any other way. Herr Schnell, a German New Yorker,—a hardware man,—and his wife are my best friends. She first spoke to me at table.

"Dot Caffee is not good for Ihnen. *Sie müssen Wasser trinken.*"

"I am here for my throat," I told her; "I only need hardening; besides, Father Kneipp drinks coffee."

"Dot Pfarrer is not krank—sick, how you say?"

My dear, she actually sent the coffee away, and forbade the *kellner* ever to bring it to me again! The Schnells and I patronize the same fruit-stand, and we walk up and down after meals together, eating grapes out of paper bags. A certain forlorn Pole at our table interests me; he is called Count Chopski, or some such name. His nerves are shattered by too much cigarette smoking. Frau Schnell and I came upon him in the wood the other day, sitting behind a big tree smoking. Frau Schnell marched up to him, took the cigarette out of his hand, and gave him a scolding for smoking on the sly. He began to cry!

I am at the best hotel, which is of a simplicity! Big people and little people all sit down to the half-past-twelve dinner; only royalties (there are always some of them here) are allowed to keep any state. At the table next mine a Bishop and a ballet-dancer sit side by side; it is an open joke to all of us, except the Bishop, who doesn't know, and nobody will tell him,—I call that nice feeling. In all my life I have never met with such simple kindness as there is here; it's a sort of Kingdom-come place, where everybody feels responsible for everybody else. Nothing of the am-I-my-brother's-keeper? feeling here! Of course, it is all Pfarrer Kneipp; the whole atmosphere of place and people is the expression of a great, ardent heart which beats for sick humanity, which rages against all shams and cruelties. His atmosphere is like my father's, the spirit here more like that of the old Institution for the Blind in his day, than anything I have ever known.

When Sebastian Kneipp was a young student preparing for the priesthood (he was the son of a poor weaver) his health broke down so completely that he was obliged to give up his studies. One day in a convent library he stumbled on a copy of Preissnitz's book on water-cure. Impressed by the theory, he persuaded a fellow-student in the same predicament as himself to join him in putting it into practice. It was midwinter. The two lads broke the ice from a neighboring stream in which they took their baths. Heroic treatment, but it saved them; both soon regained their health. Kneipp finished his course of study, took orders, returned to his native village of Woerishofen as parish priest, and has remained here ever since.

From the beginning he seems to have been more interested in curing his parishioners' bodies than in saving their souls. He tells of being called to administer the last sacrament to a dying man. The moment he saw him he threw away book and candle, called for a pail of water and a linen sheet, put the patient in a wet pack, and saved his life. For many years the Pfarrer only practised among his peasant neighbors. Gradually his fame spread to the surrounding villages, to the city of Munich, to other cities. People began to flock to Woerishofen from all over Germany, France, Europe, America, till finally this obscure Bavarian hamlet has become one of the world's great Meccas of health.

The only person who makes any effort for society is an Austrian Countess, a great Court lady. She has taken a tiny cottage, brought her own cook, maid, and butler from Vienna, and tries to give "at homes." I heard some good music at her rooms the other day. Somehow she had managed to draw together half a dozen people of the sort that can make "society" in the prison of La Jacquerie, on an ocean steamer, or even at a German cure,—an Austrian officer, an English diplomat, a French Abbé, my Polish Count, and the musician, who is a real artist. We walked with the gods for that hour; the pianist gave us whatever we asked for—Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Greig. It was a *Kaffee-klatsch* without the coffee (all stimulants are forbidden, even tea and coffee); the butler handed—scornfully, I thought—milk and grapes. The party broke up rather hurriedly at sunset, everybody rushing away to get their *Wassertreten* before dark. Water treading is to wade up to one's knees in one of the streams which run through the fields. Very pleasant, very comic—fortunately, there is a male stream and a female stream; such chippendales! such piano legs have I seen! It is all so strange, so *echt deutsch*! The Countess does not harmonize with the rest, she is out of key. I meet her at seven o'clock in the morning, feet, head, neck, and arms bare, strolling over the wet grass, a lovely, incongruous vision; hair dressed and "*ondulée*" in the latest fashion; her parasol, rose-colored satin. Now, a rose-colored satin parasol at Woerishofen is a false note in a pastoral symphony. She worships Father Kneipp; they all say she owes him her life; he cannot endure her, has attacked her almost openly in his talks; he will not tolerate folly, vanity, or worldliness; she personifies—oh, so charmingly—all three! She wears the prescribed dress of coarse Kneipp linen with such a difference; the other women look like meal-sacks; she has the lines of a Greek goddess.

In the early morning all the patients walk barefoot through the wet grass. Those who have been here longest go without shoes and stockings all day. I am told it is delightful to walk barefoot in the new-fallen snow. Women's skirts reach only to the ankles; men wear knickerbockers. The only foot-gear allowed at Woerishofen is the leather sandal, classic and comfortable. Newcomers begin by wearing the sandal over the stocking, then the stocking is left off for half an hour—an hour—finally for the whole day. An hour and a half after breakfast and dinner a cold douche is taken. The *blitzguss* (lightning douche) is for people who have been taking the cure for some time, the *rumpf* (body) douche is commonly prescribed for new arrivals. At the ladies' bath attached to this hotel a rosy *mädchen* plays the hose upon the patient with skill and firmness. That ordeal over, the dripping victim scrambles hastily into her clothes—drying and rubbing are forbidden—and exercises vigorously until she is perfectly dry and warm. The ex-

hilaration which follows is indescribable. In the exercise-room attached to the largest bath I have seen a Bishop capering, a Princess sawing wood, a fat American millionaire pirouetting with a balancing pole. No one laughs; it is too grave a matter. You dance or prance, box, saw wood, or do calisthenics for your life—anything to get up a circulation!

Bavaria is enchanting, Bavarians are delightful, not at all like other Germans, more like the Tyrolese, simple, kind, deeply religious. I cannot imagine becoming a "convert" in Rome, but here it would be easier. Why should the people of Catholic countries have better manners than Protestants? I know, you will bring up some old saw about sincerity and truth not always being compatible with suavity! We can't be *all* right and they *all* wrong, and "yet and yet" the Pope keeps his own private account at the Bank of England! Does this mean that he, like the people I meet every day, is readier to trust an Englishman or an American than his own countrymen?

I keep thinking of him, my neighbor in Rome, the Prisoner of the Vatican, shut up between the walls of his garden through all the long summer. I used to look at his windows and wonder if he felt the heat as much as I in those last August days before we came away on our *villeggiatura*. No *villeggiatura* for him, he is still there! The "Black Pope" (as the power of the Jesuit is called) is his gaoler,—not good King Humbert, as you may have been led to suppose,—but a prison is a prison, whoever the gaoler may be.

I am learning all I can about the Kaiser. I am inclined to think he plays the strongest game at the European card-table. The Bavarians I have talked with seem rather bored by him; they compare him unfavorably with poor, dear, mad King Ludwig and his father, great art patrons, both.

The Prussians think him the greatest man on earth. I gather from one of their number that the Court people are harried by him beyond belief; he is forever interfering with their private affairs. A young officer with an English wife and English tastes set up a tandem in Berlin last winter. He received a message from the Emperor requesting him not to drive one horse before the other! How can they bear it? The Kaiser had lately been at Rome when we first arrived, and people were still telling stories of him. The Italians are not over-fond of his visits; he costs a great deal to entertain and is too much given to dropping in to tea! He stayed at the Quirinal Palace, the guest of the King. As such, etiquette forbade his visiting the Pope. You don't suppose he let a little thing like that interfere! On a day the German Ambassador to the Vatican (you understand there are two Ambassadors, don't you, one to the King, one to the Pope?) received notice that the Emperor was to be his guest for the morrow. The Amba-

sador, a bachelor of simple tastes, prepared as best he could. The Emperor arrived with a portmanteau, made one of his lightning changes, and came down to breakfast. The breakfast-table was a bright spot, a friend having lent a fine service of silver and some wonderful Venetian glass. When the Kaiser saw the display he cried out, "Mein Gott, A——, where did you steal all these?" Rather nice, wasn't it? After they had "eated and drinked," a carriage, come all the way from Berlin, with horses, harnesses, and servants to match, drove up to the door and carried the Emperor off to call on the Pope! It would not have been etiquette to use the Italian royal carriage to pay the papal visit!

Prince Doria's ball for the Kaiser must have been gorgeous; the picture-gallery was a blaze of glory,—you remember the great Velasquez portrait of Pope Julius II. there?—all the jewels in Rome were present except the emeralds of the Pope's tiara. When he went away the Kaiser said to the Prince,—

"We shall be very glad to see you at Potsdam, but we cannot show you anything like this." Handsome of him, wasn't it?

When he went sight-seeing to St. Peter's he admired my fountains. Well he might! After watching them some time he said, "Turn them off now; it's a pity to waste so much water." Thrifty, eh? Turn off Carlo Maderno's fountains, which have danced in the sun and shimmered in the moon nigh three hundred years!



WOOD VOICES

BY ROBERT GILBERT WELSH

CHICKADEE,
 What a merry note is yours!
 Calling us so gleefully,
 Chickadee,
 Could a friendlier errant be
 Sent to lure us out of doors?
 Chickadee,
 What a merry note is yours!

Thrush with the silver song,
 Gramercy for your lay!
 You to Romance belong,
 Thrush with the silver song,
 And you bring the poet-throng
 To our world of workaday.
 Thrush with the silver song,
 Gramercy for your lay!

THE SEVENTEENTH OF AUGUST, 1844

By Marion Harland

Author of "His Great Self," "A Gallant Fight," etc.



PEOPLE who are old enough to recollect what happened on Saturday, the seventeenth of August, 1844, insist that it was a bodeful as well as a brooding hush that rested upon the Court-House village as the afternoon drew towards sunseting.

The sun was a heated copper ball; the cloudless sky looked hard and hot. The fine, red dust, beaten to powder by many wheels and hoofs, hung languidly above the one broad street crooking from east to west in traversing the hamlet.

The loungers in the porch of the largest of the three stores representing the mercantile interests of the place wore their thinnest summer clothes. Most of them held their hats upon their knees; six out of the nine had their feet on the porch-railing.

It had been an exciting day, and the little town looked tired. Up and down the street were to be seen family groups upon doorsteps and at open windows, but the low hum of conversation was intermittent and scarcely stirred the sultry air. Loafers in knots of twos and threes occupied the benches set against the outer wall of the Bell Tavern, the principal hostelry of the region, a long, low, white building broadened by a two-storied portico. Several Lombardy poplars, their boles white-washed up to the lowest boughs, stood in front of the portico—seven finger-posts pointing straight, but listlessly, towards heaven, the leaves too heavy-laden with dust to quiver had there been a breath of wind, and there was none.

Half-a-dozen negro women hung about the well which stood between the tavern and the store, empty buckets in hands, full buckets on heads. The bearers leaned towards one another in subdued confabulation, nodding portentously, and now and then groaning low and with unction. No strain of imagination was required to conceive that the coppery sun, the hard, hot sky, motionless trees, and drooping vines shared in the expression of suspenseful waiting pervading men and women and even the children sitting upon doorsteps, or lying upon the dusty grass edging the crooked street.

Suddenly from a house directly opposite the store a burst of music

broke the hush into startled vibrations. The leap and ripple of a popular air from piano-keys was overborne by a voice, clear and buoyant as a mocking-bird's matins:

"Oh, the floating scow of Ole Virginia!
That I've rowed from day to day,
A rakin' among the oyster-beds,
To me it was but play.
But now I'm old and crazy, too,
I cannot work any more,
Oh, carry me back, oh, carry me back
To Ole Virginia's shore!"

The audacious lilt and swing of the chorus brought six pairs of heels from the porch-rail to the floor to beat time softly; one bass voice hummed a deep "brum! brum!" as an accompaniment; two negro children, with but a single garment apiece, fell to dancing before the store-door, the red dust swirling under the double shuffle. The loitering negroes pricked up their ears, transfixed as by a common horror; up and down the street ran a wave of excitement, heightened, as the songstress began the second verse, by the apparition in the door of the store of the burly proprietor, George Swann, the biggest and the richest man in the town. The bass voice and the drumming were stilled on the instant; consternation and amusement passed from eye to eye.

The big man's keen gray eyes, deep-set under bushy brows, took in every man of the party as he strode past; at the bottom of the steps he dealt a cuff to each of the dancers that tumbled him heels over head into the road—but he said never a word.

"He's after other game!" muttered one of the rebuked loafers as the irate merchant disappeared within his own house.

Another groaned, "O Lord!" with a meaning shrug; a third, "I wouldn't be in her shoes for a pretty!"

"She can take care of herself!" responded the owner of the good bass voice, striving palpably after self-reassurance. "She's a chip of the old block with the bark on. Listen!"

For the gay run of melody went on, more clearly audible across the street, as if the singer had turned her face towards her father at his entrance:

"And when I'm dead and gone to rest
Lay th' ole banjo by my side,
Let the 'possum an' th' 'coon to th' fun'ral come,
For they were my only pride.
In soft repose I'll sweetly sleep,
An' I'll dream forever more
They're carryin' me back to Ole Virginia,
To Ole——"

While she sang a man was speaking, more and more loudly until a harsh bellow carried some words to the listeners over the way.

"I will be master in my own house! Stop that racket, I say! You won't! We'll see about that, my lady!"

A crash and a stifled scream broke off the song and brought five young men to their feet.

"By ——! if the brute has hit her, I'll *kill* him!" panted the bass singer, red and choking. "*There's* a Christian father for you!"

An older man put out a lazy leg to intercept the other's motion towards the steps.

"Keep cool, Dick Lowry! He slammed the piano-lid down on her hands. I heard the keys rattle. Don't *you* put your fingers between the bark and the tree. Somebody said somethin' just now about a chip and the bark. I ain't takin' his part, mind you, but she's his child, and he's the strictest kind of a Methodist, rec'lect, and 'twas kinder owdacious to play that nigger song just at sunset, don't you know?"

The drawl sank into an odd, reverent cadence upon the last words, and the eyes of all turned by common impulse to the west.

The treetops seemed on fire with the consuming heat of the red-hot globe as the lower rim touched the forest horizon. In all the tremendous hollow above them there was insupportable glare and silence. The whole world waited and listened. A shamefaced pause ensued that would have been unaccountable to one ignorant of that day's history. Then one "reckoned" awkwardly that "it must be near supper-time," and the group dispersed—some up street, some down.

Within ten minutes the long, wavering, dusty line of highway was forsaken of all except a few children, white and colored, sitting about doors or hanging over the palings. Even they were quieter than was their noisy wont.

The day which was soon to darken into a purple August night was to be forever memorable in the annals of the mid-Virginia shire-town.

It was an easy-going, pleasure-loving community in the main, without a touch of the stern asceticism that made monumental the piety of their New England brethren. Yet it was a religious people, believing steadfastly in the faith committed to the saints as interpreted by their preachers, and in nothing more steadfastly than in the necessity of conviction and conversion, regeneration and baptism, leading up to enrolment upon the church books for every creature born of mortal woman if one would escape an eternity of misery. There was not a Universalist within the confines of the county. By whatsoever name they called themselves, every churchmember held fast to the essential points of doctrinal belief I have named, and the boldest sinner without the pale enclosing the saints never hinted a doubt as to their truth.

So the great concourse that had assembled at the Court-House this

week to attend upon revival services held in the only church in the village was solemnized, if not convicted, by the exceptionally "powerful" preaching to which all classes had hearkened, at the rate of three sermons daily, from Sunday morning until Saturday afternoon.

The church stood apart from the Court-House proper. It was an ugly brick building, stained blackly from unguttered eaves downward with the drippings of twenty years' storms, and stained redly upward by splashes from the mud about the foundation-walls. There was no enclosure except at the back, where a rude rail fence kept straying cattle out of a graveyard as dismal as the church. Not a tombstone gleamed in this one of God's acres; briers, wire-grass, and Jamestown weeds obliterated the outlines of mounds and filled up graves that had sunken gruesomely with the decaying of what they held. One tall pine that had grown bushy in isolation towered above the roof-tree and sang a ceaseless requiem for the neglected dead in its shadow.

By an architectural freak, not uncommon in Virginia at the time of which I am writing, the pulpit was between the two front doors. The freak was not unpopular with first-comers, who, seated at their ease, could scrutinize later arrivals from the moment they appeared in the doorway until they found refuge from the fire of eyes upon one of the obdurate benches, and became in their turn observers and critics. The benches were unpainted; the back of each consisted of a single flat rail that pressed cruelly under the shoulder-blades of the tall and abraded the shoulder-caps of the undersized.

The church had been swept and scrubbed—the period antedating the garnishing of orthodox sanctuaries with pines and posies—the week before, under the direct supervision of Mrs. George Swann, in preparation for the revival. That this church in particular and the neighborhood in general were to be visited by "a gracious outpouring" was a foregone conclusion, for the Presiding Elder would be present to uphold the hands of the local circuit-rider, a fledgeling theologian of few intellectual or educational gifts and much conceit. Other brethren from other fields would bear part in the week's exercises, some of them men of spiritual might and unbroken wind. The drawing card, however, was a young preacher whose rising reputation as orator and saint was a matter of especial interest to the Swann connection, and through this connection a source of liveliest interest to their fellow county people.

Blair Winfree, a graduate of Randolph Macon College, had, when a candidate for licensure to preach the gospel, fallen under the deep-set gray eyes of Brother Swann at a Conference held in Lynchburg. The promising youth found approval in the judgment of the prosperous merchant. He introduced him to his wife and his two daughters, Mary and Signora, who had accompanied him to the Conference. In a burst of surprised confidence to his wife, three months thereafter, George

Swann owned that he "wouldn't have minded if the fellow had fallen in love with Mary." As a sound Arminian he held no commerce with predestinarians, but he had always thought, and sometimes said, that Mary was cut out for a minister's wife. Instead of lending a hand in the fulfilment of this purpose, Blair Winfree—a "Reverend" by now—fell swiftly and hopelessly in love with Mary's younger, prettier, and gayer sister. At the end of a quarter's wooing by visits and letters he had won her affections and her pledge to become his wife.

"Sister Swann"—a mother in Israel, as well as mistress of the fine new house her husband had put up over the way from the store where the money was made to build and to run it—was not a novel-reader. A majority of her sect and a goodly percentage of Presbyterians classed fiction with card-playing and dancing—devilish schemes, all of them, for the enslavement and ruin of immortal souls. Nevertheless, she had once, in a backsliding interval, dipped into a romance in which a leading character was habitually addressed as "Signora." As Mrs. Swann afterwards expressed it, she was "sort of nervous and notional just then, and on the lookout for a real pretty, uncommon name, and this one stuck to her mind." So persistently did it adhere, and so potent was the obsession, that she would hear of no other for her second daughter, born during that backsliding summer. The mother and her neighbors, who had never read the Italian romance, pronounced the "fancy name" as it was spelled. Shortened into "Sig," it stood, eighteen years thereafter, for the dashing belle of a provincial circle. The circle was not small. Her father was well-to-do and sure to be much better-to-do. Before she tucked her hair up and let her skirts down Sig Swann had had proposals, and the number multiplied almost weekly as she grew towards the twenties. Why she accepted a poor preacher was as grievous a puzzle to men of all ages as his choice of her as a life-partner was to maidens and matrons of the more pious sort.

She was not a churchmember. True, that unsanctified condition might change through a providential interposition, borne out by the efforts of the gracious young man who had "brought" so many other unregenerate souls "through." Providence and a believing husband combined could not alter the girl's disposition and character. She was a born flirt, a rattle and madcap, as wild as a hawk, incorrigibly light-hearted and light-headed. Her saucy sayings were quoted throughout the county, her daring escapades came just short of being scandals. Had Brother Winfree searched the world over he could not have found a woman less fit to be a minister's wife.

The engagement was not announced, or even frankly acknowledged. The customs of the time and the locality forbade this. So there was ample opportunity for all the parties in the case to hear how friends and acquaintances thought and talked of the "affair." The Swanns

listened and were discreet. The father brooked no interference in his family or business concerns; his wife and model Mary thought just as father did. Sig laughed criticism out of court and went on her way, rejoicing in her youth, her happiness, and her love. "Carried a higher head than ever!" said censors and admirers.

This was the sixth day of the Protracted Meeting, and next to the last. The Presiding Elder and his working staff were due on Monday in other parts of the vineyard. Nerved by the thought that the day of grace was drawing to an end, public preaching and private exhortations were terribly "close" both morning and afternoon—an electric storm of warning and provisional anathemas that shook the impenitent to trembling and tears. The altar was thronged with kneeling mourners, and the aisle for half the depth of the church. The attendant ministers and their lay assistants picked their way warily among their spiritual patients for fear of stumbling over men's legs or catching a toe in the trailing folds of a woman's gown.

Sig Swann sat in a side-aisle against the wall and by a window. The position was deliberately chosen and with purpose. She had, from her coign of vantage, an excellent view of her lover in the pulpit, and could exchange over the low sill an occasional repartee, sotto voce, with a band of youths who preferred standing-room in the fresh air to being packed within-doors like sweating herrings in a barrel. The Reverend Elisha Powell, the county circuit-rider, who always spread his handkerchief under his knees when he dropped upon them for a special petition in altar and aisle, pulled himself up from the twentieth repetition of the performance, and, facing the congregation, wiped the blinding perspiration from his eyes and mopped his lantern jaws with the expansive damp cambric on which grime from the gritty boards had melted into mud.

The young fellows outside ducked grinning faces below the window-sill to guffaw and chuckle in comfort. Sig Swann buried her face in her handkerchief, bowing her head upon the back of the bench before her in an agony of suppressed mirth. The convulsion lasted long and was fierce. The strong necessity of stifling all audible tokens of the paroxysm that held her by the throat and stopped her breath, united with a growing sense of the grotesque incongruities of scene and sensations to overpower even such proprieties as she recognized and would fain obey. She was quivering like a leaf in a whirlwind when a hand fell upon her bowed back.

"Daughter, resist not the strivings within you!" said raucous accents in her ear. "Take my arm and let me lead you to the altar. There yet is room at the mercy-seat."

The prettiest face in the church, flushed and tearful, was raised to see a coarse visage within two inches of it—coarse in mould and ruddied

by rum. Watery eyes leered into the girl's, which dried instantly in a blaze of indignant modesty. She shuddered away from the heavy hand, seeming to strike it off in a gesture of loathing and repulsion.

"Don't touch me!" she uttered in a hissing whisper, glancing wildly around for some way of escape.

In the same flash of time and thought she gathered her skirts deftly about her, put one foot upon the seat, mounted with birdlike swiftness to the back, and flew through the window, as a swallow might flit, into strong, emulous arms stretched to receive her.

Mrs. Swann always drove to church. Matrons of her age and that age never thought of walking a hundred yards upon their own feet. Her carriage was close by. Sig sprang into it, fell back upon the cushions, and had the laugh which was a cry—the cry which was a laugh—out, unrestrained by the sympathizing plaudits of "the boys" she had known and romped with all her life.

Fully fifteen minutes passed before she stole back into the church, prettier than ever in her subdued mood and forced demureness. As she told the boys, there would be no end of talk if she stayed in the carriage and talked with them until church was out. To herself she said that Blair Winfree was sure to be called upon to speak again before meeting broke up. She never willingly lost one word that he said in public or in private. He would miss her even in that throng. He had told her often that he was never quite himself when she was out of his sight. He was speaking when she had slipped through the crowd until she could catch a glimpse of him. The face she thought as beautiful as a young god's had a clear pallor, like the shining of white flame through an alabaster mask; his voice had deep tones that were new even to her; the forced calmness of his enunciation was more impressive than his most impassioned bursts of oratory had ever been. He made not a gesture from first to last. Erect and still, he gave forth the message that burdened soul and heart.

"To-morrow is the last—the great—day of this solemn feast," were the first words that reached the girl's ears.

"To-morrow the gate of mercy may be—will certainly be—closed upon some who now hear these words. I ask each one now present—whether Christian or impenitent, saint or sinner—to devote to this subject, the most momentous man or woman can consider, just ten minutes at sunset this evening. Go apart and alone, each of you, and think seriously for that little quarter-inch of time where you mean to spend Eternity. It is a little thing that I ask of you—a dying man of his dying fellow-men. To-day, if you will hear His voice, listen for it as the sun looks his last upon the world you must leave before long. Give God and His message to each individual soul but ten minutes. Commune with your own heart and be still. Your eternal destiny may be settled in that span of time.

"It may be that some soul in this vast assembly may never see that sinking sun kiss the eastern horizon to-morrow morning. I do not know to whom of you this may be the last night on earth. I do know that God will not always hold out the pardon I, His most unworthy servant, offer to you now in my King's name. In the breathless hush of this hour I recognize the Spirit's waiting upon your next step—upon what may be your final action. Carry this awful thought home with you. I am making a sunset appointment for you with that Spirit."

While he was speaking the Presiding Elder had arisen, and now stepped forward to his side, laying his episcopal arm almost caressingly about the well-built shoulders. His liking for the brilliant young brother was patent to all within the diocese.

"Well-spoken!" he said, weighing the oily gutturals as one might distil precious ointment of spikenard, cassia, and myrrh. "The words of my dear brother are as apples of gold in pictures of silver. I would enforce—not add to—them. If anyone within the sound of his voice or of mine fails to devote the sunset moments of this day as he has implored you to devote them, let not that man or that woman send for either of us in his or her dying hour, when the guilty soul would, like Russia's mighty Empress, give millions of money for an inch of time. Vain then will be the help of man. You have listened to a gracious invitation. Couple this warning with it in your minds as you leave this mount of privilege for homes that, ere long, will know you no more."

He lifted one long arm, in pronouncing the benediction, as deprecating the vengeance of an offended God.

Mrs. Swann, her daughters, and Blair Winfree drove home in company. The mother and Mary wept behind their handkerchiefs all the way down the street. Blair sat upright in his corner of the front seat, looking gloomily towards the horizon with eyes that saw not. Sig bowed and smiled to acquaintances walking and driving towards their respective homes, and twice kissed her hand to girls who looked curiously at carriage and occupants.

"We are making a holy show of ourselves," meditated she to her madcap inner self, biting a restive tongue to hold in the words. "I should like to shake Blair and Mary! It's a part of mother's religion to cry in public. All this sort of thing makes me as hard as flint and as wicked as the Old Harry!"

When her mother and sister passed sobbingly into the house the aroused imp of mischief tempted her to stop at the gate to exchange greetings with Dick Lowry and his sister, who would have gone by but for her merry challenge. Blair Winfree stood a little aloof, waiting for her, his imperturbable gravity protesting unequivocally against levity he esteemed out-of-taste and irreverent.

Susie Lowry ran back to drop a word in her friend's ear:

"But *won't* you catch it? He looks 'grand, gloomy, and peculiar!' I should be afraid as death of him!"

Sig laughed outright, rather fearlessly than defiantly, and joined her lover.

"Are you very tired?" she queried, looking frankly and brightly up at him.

"Not in the least, thank you," formally civil, his eyes absolutely irresponsive to the gay seeking of hers. "Can you come to the summer-house presently? I want to talk with you."

"By way of variety?" a loving glint in the saucy glance. "I'll be there in five minutes—as soon as I can get rid of my bonnet and gloves. How hot it is! I'm sure the thermometer must be a thousand in the shade!"

Mrs. Swann, kneeling in prayer in her locked chamber, wept more abundant and saltier tears as the fleet steps went by her door and the happy voice trolled a snatch of "Bonny Doon" upon the stairs. The day had brought to her the bread of grief to eat, flavored with bitter herbs of mortification.

The trysting-place stood in the exact centre of the spacious garden—a roomy arbor, paved with gravel, walled and roofed by white and yellow jessamine, virgin's bower (known to modern florists as wistaria), and divers sorts of honeysuckle. Something was always blooming there, from the golden bells of the jessamine and pale purple clusters, like etherealized grapes, of the wistaria, that took brave precedence of foliage in springtime, to the Christmas flowering of the Florida honeysuckle, which never cast its leaves.

Signora Swann had no coy secrets from her betrothed. He knew from her own confession that the summer-house was the dearest spot upon earth to her, and why. He had first told his love here, in language so fervid as to chase all disposition to coquetry from her mind. She had trembled and swayed before the passionate outpouring as the weakest of her sex, who had never, until that hour, hearkened to a "proposal," might have thrilled and shrank. Here and then she had promised to be his wife—"the sun, the inspiration, and the glory of his life." That was the way he put it then, and, with a thousand variations, since that sunset hour when she could have been sure that all the vines were in blossom at once, and that the gold and silver bells of the jessamine, the coral bells of the honeysuckle, rang together for joy even her nimble tongue could not syllable. She had a habit of bringing Blair's letters here to read. Sometimes the rain dripped through the green matting of the roof, and she laughed up at the clouds. More than once snow had fallen upon what she called in her answers to Blair her "red-letter days." She would read the loveful pages nowhere else.

He had tasted the bitter-sweet of these associations with the sylvan shelter, sitting upon "their bench," smileless and sad, before he heard the far-off click of the garden-gate. A ponderous weight and chain drew it shut, drawing the iron latch violently into its socket.

"The sentinel upon the outer wall," Sig had named it, and it had done them many a good turn in signalling the approach of possible intruders. Against his will—or so it seemed—he leaned forward to watch for the first glimpse of her. She was in full sight in the embowered alley when a white rose-spray, loaded with flowers, caught at her hair as she tripped by, and she stopped to disentangle it. She did it with careful touches. She was ever tender to flowers, to children, and to all helpless things.

And how bewitching! His heart swelled painfully under the straight-breasted coat as the eyes he could not turn away renewed the inventory of the charms that had enslaved him. He stood six feet in his boots, and she, as he loved to remind her, "no higher than his heart"—the heart on which the bonny head, crowned with rust-brown curls, had rested times without number.

He winced restlessly and moaned faintly, his hand moving towards his chest, where the novel, nameless pain was boring like a heated rapier.

Her eyes were the same color as her hair, with lights like the flashes from the heart of a ruby in them when she laughed; her complexion had the clear pink of a peach-blossom; her teeth between the ripe lips were even and pure as the royal lover's flock "gone up from the washing." The simile came to the watcher for the first time. It was odd he had never quoted the words to her in this, their garden of delights.

She was close upon his retreat, skimming the walk as a boat the water, her filmy muslin blowing and billowing in the breeze created by the motion. He ought to rise and step forward to meet her. He sat still until, parting the trailing festoons about the doorway, she forestalled his motion by coming straight up to him, took his face in her two hands, and kissed him between the eyes. Then, in the safe privacy of the vine-woven walls, she alighted upon his knee.

"And what does my dear boy want to talk to me about?" she trilled in pleased expectancy.

The hardest task of his life was upon him. The future could have none other so hard.

He began it with "God help me!" and believed the inward groaning was a prayer. In saying it he recalled the Presiding Elder's tone in uttering, "God help and give you courage, my dear boy!" at their parting less than half-an-hour ago. He reminded himself, also, that he must report after the night service to his superior (who would almost certainly be a bishop some day).

He made short work of the business in hand. I, the chronicler of an "ower-true tale," will make it yet more brief.

He and his best friends—notably his brethren in the ministry—had long appreciated (reluctantly) the "extreme inadvisability" of the union of a minister of the gospel and a non-professor. He (and they) had hoped and prayed that her conversion would make the crooked way straight. As matters now stood, in view of her disregard of her soul's interests and her contempt for sacred things displayed in many ways, the question forced itself upon his mind—

She seemed not to have followed him quite to the point at which she interrupted him, but to have caught an earlier phrase.

"Contempt for sacred things!" she repeated, bewildered. "I am not a Christian, I know, and I have told you one hundred times, at least, that I am not half good enough to be a minister's wife—not one-tenth good enough to be yours. But I do respect religion—the real sort, such as you and mother and a few other people I know have. And I try to treat sacred things respectfully."

It may have been that the loving humility of the reference to himself stabbed him too keenly for the perfect control he had meant to maintain, and that the hurt to heart and conscience sharpened his speech. He dallied no longer with preliminaries.

"Your behavior this afternoon confirmed our gravest misgivings," he said abruptly. "It was indecorous in the extreme——"

He stopped, confounded by the change from grieved perplexity to unfeigned amusement. Her face dimpled and glowed with fun and relief.

"Oh!" with a long breath. "You saw me, did you? I was in hopes you didn't. But, dear boy,"—her favorite pet name for the stalwart Adonis,—"*you* couldn't have seen and understood all! Poor Mr. Powell's handkerchief was dirty—you know he is so careful of his new pantaloons, and the floor is awfully dusty. Why, Blair! his face looked like the American flag, all but the stars. It was striped like a zebra. I can't imagine how he did it so regularly."

She stopped, overcome by the recollection, sobering down at the heavier cloud upon the listener's brow.

"I did try hard not to laugh,—but there were the boys at the window, you know, and Dick Lowry snickered and dodged out of sight—and Mr. Powell was so innocent and sanctimonious—and *so* streaked! Don't be angry, dear! Jeremiah himself couldn't have kept his face straight."

Blair raised a rebuking hand. Gesture and tone were professional.

"I saw it all, and felt no inclination to smile. I saw too, as did every preacher on the platform, that you pushed Mr. Harris away rudely before you jumped through the window. He referred to it in

the conference of ministers and lay-workers held after the services were over. He had every reason, he said, to think that you were under conviction, and was moved by the best intentions in offering to lead you to the altar. God knows"—the man getting the better of the priest—"how I wish things had been as he thought! It would have changed the whole face of the world for me!"

Love's intuition divined his meaning. Her hand stole up to stroke the bowed head.

"Blair, dear, that man was *drunk*! His breath scorched my face when he called me 'daughter.' He is a bad man, through and through. His touch is an insult to any decent woman. If the day ever comes when I go up to the altar to be prayed for, I won't go with my arm hooked in the handle of a whiskey-jug!"

It was his turn to catch at a phrase. His arms closed tightly about her, the words came hot and fast:

"If that day ever comes! My darling! why shouldn't it be *this* day? There is such a safe, easy way to avoid what hangs over me like the day of doom! Won't you do this one thing for me to-night? I will come down for you, myself, and take you to the altar. Think what the step will mean to your mother—to the many who love you and pray for your salvation! Think what it will be to *me!* to *us!*"

She shrank from rather than towards him. Her eyes were strangely troubled. Her voice was still gentle,—she was never tart with him,—but inflections he had never heard before were in emphasized words:

"I don't think—I—*quite*—understand! You surely wouldn't have me act a *lie* by going up to be prayed for unless I *feel* that I am a sinner and want to be saved? We've talked all this over often and often, you know. Of course, I know I am a sinner. The Bible says so, and all you good people say so. But, somehow, I can't feel sorrow for sin! I've tried hundreds of times—but I just *can't*. I think"—a gleam that was tender, yet arch, driving the clouds from her eyes—"it's maybe because I'm too happy to be sorry for *anything*. No! no! dear boy, I can't be a hypocrite even to please *you!*"

The implication stung like a whip-lash. With the dignity of his priestly office, buckramed by the smarting vanity of the carnal mind, he put her gently from him and arose to his feet.

"It is useless to prolong a scene that is unspeakably painful to me, whatever it may be to you. Doctor Graves was wiser than I when he warned me to expect nothing from argument and entreaty——"

The blood poured over her face in an angry flood.

"Doctor Graves! What right has he to interfere between us? He may be the Grand Mogul of your Church, but who gave him authority

to touch our—*affair* with the tip of his little finger? I call it rank impertinence! I am surprised that you stood it for one second!"

Another lash! Self-love bled in leaping gushes that thickened articulation when he would be august. "Doctor Graves, as Presiding Elder of the Church I have the honor to serve, is my spiritual leader. He has the right—and has exercised it—to warn me with regard to a step that may militate against my usefulness in the field to which Divine Providence has called me."

"*So-o-o!*" The monosyllable was drawn slowly between lips that barely parted. She was as pale as she had been red just now—white heat that steadied her outwardly. The ruddy lights in her eyes were fires, flickering dangerously near the surface. "You and he have gone to a mighty deal of useless trouble to bring about what I could do with a word—what I would have done in the twinkling of an eye if either of you had given me a hint of what was going on—what I am going to do this blessed minute!" She dropped a ring into his palm with disdainful finger-tips. "Show *that* to him and receive his congratulations! He'd rather see it in your hand and off of mine than to have me walk up the aisle on your arm, dissolved in hypocritical tears, to insult the God of truth in what your Pope calls 'His holy temple'!"

He laid an arm across the doorway as she would have swept forward.

"You will be sorry for this when you come to think it over!"

With precisely the action and flash that had eluded Deacon Harris's touch, she ducked under the barrier, and, sending a scornful laugh over her shoulder as she ran, sped up the alley down which she had come to the tryst.

Sitting in the summer-house, his miserable head between his hands, elbows on his knees, he heard, by and by, the rippling lilt of the negro melody, the dashing piano accompaniment. His nerves were tense wires; every note beat them like a hammer into discords that were anguish.

"God help me!" he said again.

This time it was prayer in very earnest.

And so came on the setting of the sun about which he had cast an awesome spell for the hundreds that withdrew openly to their closets, or slunk secretly, or skulked in superstitious dread, at that very instant.

He, of all who had filled the church that afternoon, gave the weird hour no thought. The copper ball cooled in horizon shadows; all the dew that would fall into the sultry August night softened and sweetened the hearts of flowers; through a gap in the leafy wall of the arbor left by the wilting vines the new moon, a timorous yellow thread, looked in over his left shoulder.

The servant sent by Mrs. Swann to call him to supper saw it and recalled the omen in after days.

The preacher would not take anything to eat, nor must the carriage wait for him at church-time—he preferred to walk.

“‘This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting!’” quoted Mrs. Swann solemnly when the message was repeated to her.

In saying it she glanced at Signora’s empty chair, her swollen eyelids reddening anew. The youngest child and the stupidest servant present knew what was meant by the “kind.” The performances of the afternoon were already a domestic disgrace and a public scandal.

She, with her husband and daughter, had gone early to evening service in order to secure good seats when the front gate closed behind Blair Winfree. The jar shook down a flurry of rose-leaves upon his head and hand. He took off his hat mechanically to brush them from it. The light from an open door fell right across him in the momentary halt. Had he glanced up at a window he knew of he must have descried the shadowy outlines of a figure leaning over the sill.

It leaned out still farther to watch him striding down the village street, his rapid footfall muffled by the dust and the turfy edges of the winding footpath.

It may have been half-an-hour—she could have thought it was half the night—before she lighted a candle and lifted her hands to the flame. A cruel red welt was upon each wrist, as if a hot bracelet had been bound there.

Her father’s words had been crueller as he dashed down the piano-lid. He had called her “a disgrace to any Christian family,” and when she exclaimed at the pain had wished savagely that he had “broken every finger, so she could never play the devil’s tunes again!” Neither her mother nor Mary had come near her to question or to sympathize. Not even the colored mammy, whose pet she had been from her birth, had stolen up to offer healing while she scolded.

“They are all against me!”—a dreary smile torturing the livid lips. “He—and his God are the cruellest of all!”

Blair Winfree preached that night like one inspired, said an admiring audience. His text—and he recurred to it again and again, and yet again, to weld each link of argument, and to rivet each illustration upon the hearer’s minds—was:

“*If thy right eye offend thee*” (or, as he interpolated, “cause thee to stumble”), “*pluck it out and cast it from thee! For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*”

He was a born orator, and oratory to the native-born Virginian is as the very breath of his nostrils. He added to the gift of oratory the rarer endowment of a personal magnetic charm, interfusing, like a sub-

tle essence, speech and tone and glance. People forgot stifling heat, the stench of guttering candles, the hum and swoop of night-flies and cockchafers, while hanging upon his impassioned periods. All three doors were jammed full of men and boys, unable to get even standing-room in the aisles; each of the windows upon two sides of the house showed a row of faces of a corpse-like pallor as seen in the candle-light against the black curtain of the night beyond.

One large window broke the dead blank of the church wall forming the fourth side of the graveyard behind the building. Dick Lowry testified to the day of his death that, glancing for a moment from the preacher's face to the window,—gaping wide for air like all the rest,—he had a fleeting glimpse of a white face dimly defined in the outer darkness. Something about the apparition, which vanished while he glanced, made him scan the congregation to see if Sig Swann were there. He could not distinguish hers among the upturned faces turned, as the visage of one man, towards the pulpit. Many were glazed with tears few could restrain, women choked back hysterical sobs that might lose them one inspired word. When he looked again at the window the black space was empty. There was an incessant play of heat-lightning on the horizon. What he thought he had seen was probably a trick of flash and shadow.

The peroration of the wonderful sermon was a vision of the Christian's heaven as it would be revealed to the soul purged by self-sacrificial fires from earthy stains, glorified and triumphant through redeeming grace:

“When once our heavenly guided souls shall climb,—
Then, all this earthly grossness quit,—
Attired with stars, we shall forever sit,
Triumphing over Death and Chance and thee, O Time!”

The sonorous periods rolled through the church—a shout of victory; the clasped hands were flung above his head in an ecstasy of divine impatience; the upraised face was as the face of a homing angel beholding the opening heavens and catching the music of celestial welcomings.

Still gazing upward—rapt and radiant—he began to sing. His voice—vibrant, powerful, sweet, and pure—filled the house and floated up to the listening stars:

“Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings!
Thy better portion trace;
Rise from transitory things
Towards Heaven, thy dwelling-place.

Sun and moon and stars decay,
Earth shall soon these scenes remove,
Rise, my soul, and soar away,
To seats prepared above!"

The congregation had arisen, swayed by one overpowering, spontaneous impulse; hundreds of voices joined in the shout of aspiration, the glorious organ-peal of the preacher's voice rising above and leading all:

"Rivers to the ocean run,
And stay not in their course;
Fires, ascending, seek the sun,
All haste them to their source,
So, the soul that's born of God——"

A pistol-shot split the outer night. Sound and flash were so near the big window that women shrieked and cowered in the belief that someone in the house had been aimed at—perhaps hit.

The preacher's grand voice—steady and exultant—finished the verse alone:

"Pants to view His glorious face,
Upward tends to His abode,
To rest in His embrace."

The Presiding Elder's benediction—duly said, that all things might be done decently and in order—was in dumb show to the writhing, trampling throng surging towards the doors.

The several streams flowed towards and met at the graveyard fence. Dick Lowry was the first to leap over it, haunted by the recollection of the window-wraith. Other men, who had snatched candles from brackets and pulpit, followed.

She lay under the branchy pine, her head touching the trunk. Her right hand still grasped the pistol she had stolen from her father's desk-drawer. The poor left hand, swollen, discolored,—ringless,—clutched at the heart in which the bullet had lodged. She had pressed the death-dealing muzzle so close and hard that the laces on her breast were burning.

Dick Lowry's hand put out the blaze.

"I couldn't help feeling 'twas her heart that was on fire," blubbered the honest fellow in telling the tale to his sister. "She opened her eyes as I did it and looked full into mine. She knew me, I'm sure, for her lips moved,—as if she tried to smile, don't you know? She was game to the last. God rest her soul!"

THE SIREN

By Churchill Williams

Author of "The Captain," "J. Devlin, Boss," etc.



THE Siren whistle at the Sampson Steel Works told that it was half-past five o'clock in the afternoon. As its quavering cry bit into the hearing a thousand men dropped their tools and flocked from machine and hammer shops, from casting-floor, pit, and furnace mouth. From the doorways of the score of big brick and iron buildings, above which hung a pall of smoke tongued with pallid flames, as many streams of sweating, grimed, and coatless men, empty dinner-pails caught in the bend of their arms, converged and swelled the human tide which poured through the main gate of the yard. With faces set the other way came the stragglers of the night-shift, hurrying to fill the places just left vacant. There was no pause in the roar of machinery and the clash of beaten metal.

Long Jones, the master of the eighty-ton hammer, walked alone. He walked slowly, his rugged face troubled, his keen eyes roving over the men who passed him in little companies, many of them talking in low tones. He answered their greetings with a grave nod of the head.

At the supper-table his landlady, bustling, bright-eyed Mrs. Scott, the little Irishwoman, asked him what was on his mind; she and he were time-sworn friends.

"It is th' men at th' works," he replied; "they've organized to strike for higher wages. There'll be trouble."

Mrs. Scott shook her head wisely. "You'd better be kapin' out of it," she warned.

"I will," he answered, and soon afterwards stalked out in the cooling June twilight and down the street. At the end of three blocks of a double row of monotonous brick-fronted, tiny houses he turned into a building larger than the rest.

This was Potterton's Hall, the meeting-place of the neighborhood. In it now were three hundred or more men, some seated, some standing, hands in breeches pockets; all of them listening to a small, square-shouldered, dark-haired man who was talking from a platform at the far end of the big room. Long Jones knew the speaker at once for one Marks, a hand in the machine-shop at the Works, a man who could do good work, but who was always restless and often in hot water.

Marks did not see Long Jones enter, and he spoke to the men with a confidence born of the belief that his audience was with him. He urged them to assert themselves and demand higher wages under threat. Red and perspiring, he sat down at last amid an excited hum of voices and the beating of applauding feet.

Then, at the very back of the room, rose a tall, gaunt figure with grizzled hair, and asked for the right to speak. Marks recognized Long Jones, and scowled. But he did not dare refuse the request. The giant master of the hammer had won the respect of the men by his hard sense, big heart, and mighty arm. And so Long Jones found all eyes on him and was uncomfortable. Yet he faced what he had to do with dogged resolution.

"I've got a word for you from th' General Manager," he began.

There was a quick indrawing of breath in every part of the room. It was as if the men saw a precipice yawn at their feet.

"Th' General Manager sent for me to-day," Long Jones went on, "and he told me to tell you that th' gates of the Works would be open next week to every man that was *not* a member of this Union, and closed to every man that *was*. That's all he said."

Long Jones came to an abrupt halt. He had given all his message; his task was done. Yet now, looking over the room, he saw many men who were his friends, many whom he pitied because they had other mouths at home to feed that were likely to go hungry. All at once he felt he must speak a word to them for himself. He had stooped to sit down. A silence that was death-like gripped the place. Even the ready-witted Marks was mute for the moment, so sudden had been the blow dealt by the message. So, when Long Jones straightened up, his voice rang on strained ears.

"It's none of my business what you do now," he said. "But you all know I've been at th' Works a good many years, and I want to see you all walking through th' gates of th' Works next week. Th' Siren has been calling you, day in and day out. You've heard it each night and morning. It'll go on whistling just th' same whether it's for you or for someone else. But you don't want to forget that if it ain't *you* it's calling to work next week, it won't be *you* it's calling to th' pay-desk either. You don't want to forget that before it's too late. There'll be many of you, then, that'll want to do its bidding, and'll find th' gates closed."

Long Jones sat down, his furrowed face very red, his gray eyes misty. He ran his fingers through his hair and pulled at his collar, which had grown choking-tight.

Marks in an instant was on his feet speaking. He knew the day was to be won or lost straightway. So he began to play upon the pride of his hearers and to dilate upon the strength of their position. They

were old, trained hands, he told them. It would be impossible for the management of the Works to fill their places at short notice. There were many important contracts to be filled by the mills. The threat of the management was an empty one. He halted. Then, changing his tone from persuasion to warning, he cried, "And what's more, every man at this meeting is marked—except *one*! Th' General Manager has a spy here. You've just seen that for yourselves. You've been told what th' General Manager will do. Th' one that'll give him news of you is the man that's just been speaking. He's a spy!"

The room faced on Long Jones. All at once he had become an outsider to them. To some he was an interloper; to some an enemy.

Long Jones got on his feet. His front was fearless. He did not plumb the depths of Marks's strategy, but he had an itching to knock him down. "I'll do what I please!" he cried defiantly. He was filled with a sudden rage. "And anybody that calls me a spy," he added, "I'll——" He shook his fist at them, choking with wrath.

The threat set the tide against him. He found himself looking into three hundred sullen faces. He did not understand, and his anger grew. So, shaking his fist, challenging them to the last, he strode from the room.

The Siren sounded the noon hour, and the six men, led by Marks, moved up the cinder pathway as if they had never trod the ground before. As a matter of fact, this road, past the pay-office to the General Manager's office, was one they had passed over twice daily for many years. In the outer office of the General Manager they stepped upon one another's toes and fingered their hats uneasily. They were all tongue-tied except Marks. He spoke with an air of assurance that was meant to cover a sense of coming defeat.

"Mr. Parks," he said to the General Manager, "we're asking for a raise of wages."

"You are?" replied the General Manager. He ran his eye over the leaves of a book at his elbow, and called out their names. Then, "How is it that you six men aren't satisfied when all the rest are?" he asked.

"They aren't satisfied either," said Marks. "There's seven hundred men feel just th' way we do."

"Where are they? I don't see them here."

"We represent them," answered Marks.

"Oh, you do! So you pay their wages?"

"No, but—you see, if we six get th' raise, they'll get it too."

"And if you *don't* get the raise?"

"Then they won't get it either. But—but——"

"Yes?"

"Well, we don't want to work at th' wages we're getting now."

"You don't? I see. Well, look here! You're losing valuable time. You might be looking for that better-paying job you're talking about. I won't keep you. Mr. Carne,"—turning to a clerk,—“Mr. Carne, take the names of these men. See that they're paid off. They're discharged!”

The General Manager turned on his heel and disappeared through the doorway into his private office. Marks and his companions remained motionless until the curt voice of the clerk started them out the door.

That afternoon, persuaded that Marks foretold their fate when he said that every man belonging to the Union would be discharged on pay-day next, the seven hundred members struck when the Siren ran up and down the scale at half-past five o'clock. In a long line they filed past the pay-office. And there each one found, accompanying the money due him, a slip of paper bearing the single word “Discharged.”

The men took the situation thus thrust upon them with a pretence of relish which ill-concealed their surprise and anger. And the weight of their resentment fell on Long Jones. They were almost sure now that Marks's statement about spies was correct. But in this they were utterly wrong; and the giant master of the hammer accepted their scowls and ugly words with a silent patience which they mistook for triumph.

But the strike itself spread, and the strikers grew obstinate with the sullenness that comes of the distrust of tradesmen, and of suffering at home, and most of all of the gnawing discontent bred of idleness.

For the mill stacks still unfurled a pall of smoke by day and cast a glow of red by night upon the sky. The rumble and clangor of machinery and the clash of beaten metal dinned upon the ear. Work went on steadily within the big yard. The mills were operated, though with difficulty.

So the thing stood when, one evening in the fifth week of the strike, Potterton's Hall held three hundred ill-tempered men who had come to try to find a way to regain what they had lost, and not one of whom knew how this was to be done. Marks was not there at the hour when the meeting should have been called to order. There was much ugly talk as the minutes slipped by, and yet he did not come. Some of them would have it that he had deserted them. In half an hour the men were on the highway to violent deeds.

But Marks was not idle at this time. Neither had he deserted them. When darkness fell he scaled the high board fence which encircled the buildings of the Works and found the place he sought. It was in the angle formed by the walls of the machine-shop and the “open-hearth” shop, a spot overgrown with weeds, shrouded in the deep shadow cast by the walls. It was a place inaccessible except to one on foot, and unguarded. It exactly suited his purpose.

For fifteen minutes he garnered from the litter of castaway bits of wood. A low pile of inflammable stuff soon hugged the wall of the machine-shop at a point where a great beam ran upward. The machine-shop was built largely of timber. Its floor was soaked with the drippings from machine journals and with the mist of oil. It was so much tinder to a flame set against it and well nourished at the start. It held many thousands of dollars' worth of machinery which it would be impossible to replace at short notice. A fire——!

Marka wagged his head. His eyes gleamed at the prospect. He remembered that the trained fire-fighting force of the Works—famous for its efficiency—was composed of men now waiting for him in Potterton's Hall.

But he was determined to make his purpose sure. So, casting round him for bigger fuel for his pyre, he recalled a stack of oil barrels near by. He scaled the fence which enclosed an oil-cloth factory a few feet away. There he overturned one of the barrels and rolled it to the fence of the Works. It would serve as a ladder from which to hoist another. He went back for this.

At that moment he saw a figure approaching along the pathway by the fence. He dropped among the weeds muttering as he recognized the giant figure of Long Jones.

Then a ferocious courage took possession of him. He crawled through the weeds to the footway. When Long Jones was opposite the barrel up-ended against the fence Marks was at his back, a stone clutched in his fingers.

Long Jones saw the barrel and halted. Marks made a leap. His arm rose and fell. Long Jones pitched on his face, a strangled cry in his throat, and lay still.

Marks listened and looked about him. No one was in sight or hearing. He rolled the second barrel to the fence, hoisted it, and dropped it into the yard of the Works. A minute later he softly scratched a match, ignited the pile of wood, and fled.

He was running up the steps of Potterton's Hall when the bass notes of the Siren fell upon his ears in a wail of sullen alarm.

While Marks was yet rolling the second barrel to his bonfire Long Jones stretched an arm and groaned. A numbness at his forehead drew his hand there. He brought it away wet with something warm. It was a full minute before his returning senses helped him to an understanding of where he was. Then he slowly got to his feet, knowing that he was hurt and needed aid.

Across the waste land, two hundred yards away, was a string of lights—the lamp-posts of the street on which he lived. Almost coming to his knees at times, he made his way to the lights and at last stumbled on the doorstep of Mrs. Scott's house.

The little Irishwoman heard his fall and, stout of heart and quick to act, soon had him in a chair in the kitchen. There, with deft fingers, she washed the wound on his head and bound it up. Long Jones, his strength returning to him, lay back and thanked her with grateful looks.

She was pinning the bandage firmly at the back of his head when the air thrilled with a low, thrumming growl. She paused to listen. Almost since her girlhood days this sound had had significance for her above all else. At this time it could have but one meaning. It was an alarm.

Long Jones felt her fingers halt and wondered. Then above the surging of the blood, as it beat with trip-hammer blows at his temples, he heard the humming. Now it grew and sharpened.

He started, head erect. He drank in the sound with nostrils distended. A dozen times his heart beat before he was sure he heard aright. The next instant he had sprung to his feet and was out of the door, his legs carrying him weakly at first, then more stoutly as he strung his muscles with the thought of what he must do and where he must go.

In Potterton's Hall Marks had succeeded in gaining the platform. He was crying for order, when the door was dashed open, and Long Jones ran in, his head swathed in bandages, his face working with excitement, one arm up-thrown. He sprang to a chair and silenced the clamor with a cry.

"Th' Siren, boys! Don't you hear her? It's th' fire-alarm! Th' Works is on fire! They're burning up! Hear her! Hear th' Siren!"

He paused. The hoarse booming of the great whistle, sullenly responding to the steam that poured into its throat, swelled and rose in pitch. Now it was the thrumming of a giant bass-viol; now a bugle call, marking the crescendo,—rising! rising! rising, until, in a shriek which pierced like needles, it dropped abruptly into a mighty, bellowing note of alarm.

The men were as stone. Long Jones, his head turned slightly, his arm upraised, stood motionless, silent, hearkening.

All at once a chorus of hoarse cries broke out. The men began to shuffle their feet. A hundred voices shouted as many things.

Long Jones leaped from his chair. With a cry—the cry of the fire-brigade which he had led at the Works—he ran for the door. As he started, three hundred men were in full cry at his heels, out into the night and across the fields—the echo of his cry on their lips.

Marks stood alone.

Empty-handed, beaten,—the bare room, a chair here and there overturned, marking the ruin of the edifice which he had raised craftily and

patiently to his own undoing; in his ears the mocking trill of that mighty pitch-pipe which had struck the keynote of the edifice's weakness and brought it tumbling about him.

Across the fields where the walls and chimneys of the Works loomed stark against the sky those who had deserted him were swarming in and about the burning machine-shop. Under the eye of the General Manager they fought the fire.

Above them, now humming like a million bees, now sounding the clarion for a fresh charge upon the swirling flame, now screaming in triumph as they gained ground, and again, in organ notes, repeating its alarm, the Siren called them to the work which was theirs to do.



AT THE CLOSE OF DAY

BY INGRAM CROCKETT

WHAT time the day doth softly close,
I hear the peeper's piccolos,
While in the west a flame of rose
Upon the hilltop lingers—
And through the dusk the fieldlark's flute
Blown softly o'er the meadows mute,—
And then the meadow brook, a lute
Touched by a fairy's fingers.

And from the fading glow above
I hear a mellow call of love,
The "good-night" of the mourning dove—
And then a far replying.
And then the moon lifts low and large,
Like some dead Titan's golden targe,
Above the river's mystic marge
Among the willows sighing.

And then the darkness, and the still
Sweet sense of sleep on wood and hill—
The dream, the beauty that doth fill
The soul with nameless longing—
The homeward path, the cedars tall,
That with their runic music call—
And like the lights in some vast hall
The stars above me thronging.

THE MAN WITH THE BLACK SPECTACLES

By William Le Queux

Author of "The Sign of the Seven Sins"



I DON'T know whether I really ought to reveal a secret which concerns one of the European Courts, but strange rumors having been spread abroad of late, I think it only just that I should set all doubts at rest by telling the truth, at the same time, of course, concealing the identity of the real persons indicated. The facts, as you will see, form a very strange story, but surely there are no circumstances half so strange in fiction as those which are constantly occurring around us every day.

We met in the hall of the Grand Hotel at San Remo five seasons ago. The expensive little Italian town was in festa for Carnival, and I recollect I had been elected one of the judges at the Battle of Flowers. In the idle hour after luncheon I was lounging in the big hall of the hotel smoking and gossiping with a couple of other male visitors, one English and the other French, when the big doors were suddenly thrown open, and from the hotel 'bus there descended a thin, gray-faced, weary-looking man, prematurely aged and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles of smoked glass. When he saw me he started, his countenance went white to the lips, and he drew back as though he had recognized in myself some person whom he had no desire to meet.

Only for an instant, however; nevertheless, his action puzzled me greatly, and I remarked to my English friend that there seemed something peculiar about the new arrival.

"My dear fellow, one never knows who one meets in Riviera hotels," he said. "Here, in the vicinity of Monte Carlo, all the thieves and black-coated blackguards of Europe congregate in winter. Why, last season, in Nice, I met at my hotel a wealthy Spaniard whom I thought a most excellent fellow, until one day the police stopped us together in the Avenue de la Gare and arrested him for murdering a man in Barcelona. Great shock for me, as you may imagine. No, my dear sir, experience has taught me to be very careful with whom I associate on the Riviera."

Provincial tradesmen from home are persons to be avoided equally with the smartly dressed adventurers, male and female, who crowd

everywhere. Hence it was that, recollecting my friend's warning, I looked askance at the new-comer, whom I at once knew to be German on account of his accent in speaking to the waiter. I have, I regret to state it, no great love for the travelling German, therefore my annoyance was increased when at dinner that night I found him seated next me, but he passed no remark all through the meal. Later, however, I glanced at the register and found that his name was Heinrich Watzdorf, of Essingen, in Wurtemberg. That told me nothing, for if he were an adventurer, he would scarcely sign his proper name.

Next day I became on speaking terms with him. It was the day of the Battle of Flowers, and as all the seats were sold, I invited him into the judges' box beside me. The judging at San Remo, as at Nice and Cannes, is done by an international committee composed of representatives of nearly every European nation, and the prizes for the best decorated carriages are sums of money, in addition to beautifully painted silken banners. The February afternoon was perfect, with brilliant sunshine and blue sea. Everywhere the little town was decorated, and along its narrow principal street—very much like the High Street of one of our own smaller towns—the Battle of Flowers was waged with delight by the crowds of wintering foreigners and holiday-making Sanramese.

We stood together looking down upon the gay, animated scene as the people pelted one another with bouquets, but my German friend made few remarks, and from his words I gathered that Carnival in the South was to him no new experience, for he seemed essentially a cosmopolitan. Suddenly, however, there appeared a smart victoria drawn by a pair of well-matched grays, the carriage being literally hidden by masses of pink carnations, even to the wheels, while built over was a canopy of the same sweet-smelling flowers, an arrangement of blossoms that could not have cost a penny less than a hundred pounds. Upon the horses were long ribbons of the Italian colors, red, white, and green, and within the carriage sat an extremely handsome, dark-haired woman of perhaps thirty-five, exquisitely dressed in the same shade as the flowers around her, while beside her sat a sweet-faced little lad of about eight years old,—her son, evidently.

As she came along smiling, now and then tossing a bouquet of violets here and there, a chorus of admiration broke from the crowd.

"Brava! brava!" they cried, and everyone at once asked his neighbor who was the beautiful stranger.

Nobody knew. We in the judges' box at once agreed that she should be given the first prize of three thousand francs for the best-decorated carriage. But the procession did not halt, and she passed by triumphantly, smiling at me and at the others.

Just as she passed she caught sight of Watzdorf, and in an instant

her countenance betrayed surprise. As their eyes met he had raised his hat to her, and for a moment stood holding it in his hand. He bowed, and then a faint smile showed at the corners of her mouth, while her son, too much occupied with the pelting of violets, noticed nothing.

Then my German friend made a strange, half-imperious gesture of the hand, which she evidently understood, for she reluctantly, almost wistfully, turned from him with a deep sorrow in her great, dark eyes. Yes, I felt sure that grief was hidden there, for in an instant her eyes were filled with tears, and she turned away from us to hide them as her carriage went forward and out of sight.

My companions had not noticed this, and the man with the black spectacles believed that he had been unobserved.

"Pretty woman, that!" I remarked casually to him in English, a language he spoke exceedingly well.

"Yes," was his answer in a low, hard voice, and his mouth shut with almost a snap.

I expressed wonder as to her identity and admiration of the taste with which her carriage was decorated, but he told me nothing regarding her, although I felt certain they were well acquainted. He stood looking after her wistfully for quite a long time, then turning away, threw himself into a chair, and lit a cigarette.

For an hour the judges stood watching for her return in order to present her with the banner, but she did not reappear, and everyone fell to wondering.

At length Prince Poninski, president of the Fêtes Committee, asked:

"Why does not the lady with the carnations return? We must give her the first prize, for the decoration surpasses everything I have ever seen at these battles. Does anyone know her?"

All replied in the negative, when, rising suddenly, the German exclaimed:

"Yes, I am acquainted with the lady, Prince. But, being desirous of preserving her incognito, she desires me to say that if you award her any money prize she will esteem it a favor if you will kindly hand the sum over to one of the charities of San Remo—whichever you may think proper."

He refused to satisfy our curiosity concerning her.

At table d'hôte that night Watzdorf's place remained unoccupied, and afterwards, when I inquired of the hall-porter whether he had returned, the man replied:

"M'sieur came back hurriedly just after dinner commenced, paid his bill, and left. He wrote a note to you. Here it is."

I opened the hurriedly scribbled message and found it to read:

"DEAR MR. LEYLAND: I have to thank you for your kindness to me during my short stay in San Remo, and 'the Lady of the Carnations' likewise wishes me to express her acknowledgments to you, as a member of the Committee, in acceding to her request. I trust that we shall meet again some day, and that we shall then know each other better. Yours truly,

"HEINRICH WATZDORF."

He had left for Genoa, I was told. Was he, after all, an adventurer, as I suspected? This sudden flight seemed almost as though he had for some reason become alarmed, especially as he had taken his room for a month and had paid for it before leaving.

Winter ended, and as a diplomatic freelance I drifted hither and thither across the Continent, often on secret missions that would have been perilous to my own personal safety had their real object been known.

In the following winter I chanced to be in Petersburg making some delicate inquiries regarding the latest diplomatic move on the part of Russia and France, and had succeeded, through the instrumentality of a certain person in our pay in the Russian Ministry of War—who must, however, be nameless—in obtaining a copy of some highly important confidential correspondence between the Ministry and the Quai d'Orsay, together with tracings of certain plans of proposed defences that were a profound secret.

These I received from my Russian friend one evening about six o'clock in Donon's restaurant at Pevcheski Most, and at eight o'clock, with those precious papers secreted in the lining of my coat, I alighted at the railway station to catch the homeward Nord Express for Ostend and London when I was suddenly surrounded by several detectives and arrested as a spy!

My heart sank, for someone had betrayed me! Knowing well that our Embassy was powerless to intercede on my behalf, secret agents not being recognized by any government, I had only before me the prospect of a long sojourn in a Russian prison—a sojourn in all probability for life.

I was replaced in the drosky, driven to the head police-office, and upon being searched the incriminating documents were, of course, discovered.

Three terribly anxious days and nights I spent in a dismal prison cell, feeling that my life had suddenly come to an end.

My anxiety of mind may be well imagined, for the knowledge that all was over, and only exile to Saghalien was before me, killed within me every hope. On the fourth night, however, my gaoler, a big-bearded ruffian of uncouth manner and colossal strength, opened my cell-door and ordered me to prepare myself for a long journey—to Siberia, I

knew. The Russian Government had at that time an unpleasant mode of sending prisoners to Nerchinsk or Tobolsk without formal trial.

So I dressed, put on my overcoat and hat, and ate a little of the hot cabbage soup that had been brought me. Then I was driven to the railway station, a police officer in plain clothes accompanying me.

I descended, when to my utter bewilderment I was greeted by no other person than the mysterious German, Heinrich Watzdorf, but without his disfiguring spectacles, and as he shook hands with me warmly the police officer slipped away and disappeared. I was alone with my friend—alone, and at liberty!

"Come, Mr. Leyland," he cried, "you have no time to lose. The express is just starting. Here is your ticket for London, a passport, and a little money. Do not return to Russia—promise me,—never."

"I promise," I said, utterly beside myself with the sudden joy. "But what does this mean? Is my liberty due to you?"

"Some day I may perhaps ask a favor of you in return," was all he replied, smiling. "We are friends, are we not?"

"Yes," I answered, giving him my hand. "Yes,—firm friends."

"Then adieu, and bon voyage," he exclaimed. And an instant later the train-de-luxe moved off on its long journey across the snow-bound plains of Western Russia—homeward.

Two whole years passed.

That Heinrich Watzdorf was really a homeless wanderer was proved in a rather curious way. I was sitting one summer's evening under the trees in the Vauxhall Gardens at Brussels, listening to the fine orchestra concert, enjoying the cool air after the heat of the day, and chatting to Captain Harold Beaufort, one of our Foreign Service messengers, who was waiting in the Belgian capital until the morrow for an important despatch from the Embassy. Suddenly, while watching the crowd of promenaders during the interval, he exclaimed:

"Look! There's a fellow I know named Schomberg. See, the one with the light felt hat and black spectacles—just gone along there! He's a bit of a mystery. I've met him in all sorts of out-of-the-way places. Always travelling! Wanted by the police, perhaps."

I looked, and to my surprise saw the mysterious German in evening dress, wearing a gray felt hat and with his spectacles, calmly smoking and strolling on with the crowd.

My first impulse was to rush after and greet him, but, resolving to wait for him to repass the table whereat we were, I reseated myself and remained with watchful eyes upon the crowd.

Contrary to my expectations, however, he did not return. I had seen his thin, sparse, melancholy figure moving slowly along in the shadow, the red end of his cigar glowing in the darkness, and it struck me more forcibly than ever that he was a man with a secret.

A fortnight later we met face to face in the Avenue de l'Opera in Paris. He was blinking through his spectacles into Brentano's shop-window, and I went boldly up and greeted him warmly.

Dressed just a trifle more shabbily than usual, he seemed, I thought, even sadder than before. At any rate, his thin, wan face was paler, even though he grasped my hand and congratulated me on my continued safety. Then, for the first time, I recollected that he was the only man who knew my true calling—that my future was in his hands!

I invited him to dinner at my hotel, the Terminus, that night, but he refused, expressing his deep regret that he was leaving Paris that evening for London.

I too was returning home, so we left the Gare du Nord by the night service for London, and after a rather "dirty" crossing arrived at early morning at Charing Cross. So careful was he to avoid meeting people, and so suspicious of everyone, that I came to the conclusion that he was, after all, a fugitive from justice. Yet such a thoroughly good fellow did I find him that upon our arrival in town I had invited him to come and stay with me at my rooms in Guilford Street, Bloomsbury. To this, however, he merely replied:

"It's really very kind of you, my dear friend. But I have relations in London, and must stay with them. I will meet you to-morrow evening. Where shall we say? At High Street, Kensington, railway station—would that suit you? If so, I shall be in the refreshment bar at eight o'clock."

"Delighted!" was my response, for I was determined to penetrate the veil of mystery surrounding him. If he were actually a foreign spy in England, then it was surely my duty to ascertain the reason of his visit to London. "We may, perhaps, go on to the St. James's Club and have a smoke," I added.

Then amid the bustle of arrival at Charing Cross in the gray of dawn we shook hands and parted.

Next evening, just before eight, I entered the long refreshment bar of the station of the Underground Railway at High Street, Kensington, and found the cosmopolitan in his gold-rimmed spectacles awaiting me.

"What I want you to witness may appear to you curious," he said presently, after we had drunk together, he still betraying a suspicion of everyone. "I first must ask you, however, to give me your word of honor to preserve in strictest secrecy all that you see and hear until—until after my death."

"Your death!" I cried. "You surely don't anticipate it just yet?"

His face relaxed into that strange, sphinx-like smile of his, but he made no response, except to ask,—

"Have I your promise?"

I gave him my hand in response, and assured him that I should

always respect any confidences he reposed in me. His manner had impressed me that he was in sore trouble. Yet he knew my real profession was that of secret agent of the British Government, and such knowledge gave him distinct advantage over me.

"Then recollect that of what you see and hear to-night you utter no word. Your lips are absolutely sealed until my death." And he paid for the brandy we had had, and we both entered a cab which was awaiting him outside.

Our drive was not a long one, for the house before which we stopped was in the quiet part of Kensington—a large detached place, old-fashioned and comfortable.

To my surprise, after glancing up and down as though fearful of observation, my friend let himself in with the latch-key, and to my astonishment I found that the interior was the very acme of taste and luxury. At his suggestion I threw off my coat and followed him into the drawing-room, a large, handsome apartment, where the electric light was tempered by soft, shaded silk, and the air was heavy with the perfume of flowers.

A lady, dressed exquisitely in a dinner-gown of turquoise blue and wearing a magnificent pearl necklet, rose to bow to me, and as I encountered her I instantly recognized her to be the Lady of the Carnations, the prize-winner at San Remo!

"Allow me to introduce you to my wife—Mr. Leyland," exclaimed my friend, removing his spectacles and wiping them.

This surprised me, for I had no idea the wanderer was married. Nevertheless, I bowed, saying:

"I am most delighted to make Madame Watzdorf's acquaintance. I recollect her great success at San Remo"—and looking round, I saw that in the room were two big old punch-bowls filled with pink carnations, her favorite flower.

She smiled and invited me to be seated. She was a well-bred, charming woman, full of grace and sweetness, and in a little while we all three drew near the fire, the pretty child made his appearance—my friend's son, I learned—and thus did I find myself one of that secret family circle.

Her husband had become much brighter, and was evidently most devoted to her. She allowed us cigarettes, declaring herself fond of tobacco at times, but in secret.

"I have heard so much of you from my husband, Mr. Leyland, that I almost felt I knew you quite well," she said to me. "To me this meeting is really most gratifying."

The old butler, evidently a confidential servant, entered presently in response to Madame's summons, and she gave him an order. In a few moments his father kissed little Heinrich "good-night." Then

with his hand on the boy's dark, curly head, he sighed, adding in German:

"Good-by, my darling. May God protect both you and your dear mother if we never meet again."

"But surely you aren't going away again, father?" exclaimed the child with a disappointed look. "Mother told me to-day that you were going to spend a whole week with us, as you did last year at Biarritz."

"Yes, child. I am very sorry," the man sighed, "but I must go. I dare not stay," he added under his breath.

Then both child and mother burst into tears at this announcement, and hand in hand they slowly left the room.

Watzdorf swallowed the lump in his throat, and turning to me he said:

"I must apologize, my dear Leyland, for thus thrusting my private affairs upon you. The motive of it will one day, perhaps, be apparent to you."

The reason of his continued wandering on the Continent while his wife lived there alone and yet in affluence puzzled me. To me he was a profound mystery from every point of view. He seemed haunted by the shadow of some crime.

"Is it really imperative that you leave again to-morrow?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered in a hard voice. "I am compelled to wander—wander always. Ah!" he sighed, "my poor Louise! It is a cruel fate that keeps us apart—a cruel fate indeed!" And for a moment his chin fell upon his breast as he slowly paced up and down the handsome room.

Suddenly, however, he roused himself and invited me into the study, where he closed the door, locked it, and, having mixed me a drink, raised his glass to me. Then he said quite seriously:

"Leyland, I know that you are a secret agent in the employ of the British Foreign Office—a man of all others whom I ought to avoid, for you are an investigator of secrets. No doubt you regard me as a mystery. Well, I scarcely wonder. You have seen to-night the tragedy of my life,—you have seen my dear Louise and my child, from whom a hard fate keeps me apart,—yet you have given your word of honor to breathe no word of it to any living soul. Now I wonder if you would accept from me a little commission? It is not much I ask of you." And he unlocked his despatch-box, which, still in its battered leather travelling-case, stood upon a side-table, and from it drew forth a packet sealed with five formidable black seals bearing a fine coat of arms. "You see this? Well, I wish you to hold it until my death. When I am gone, break the seal and act in accordance with the directions I have written. Recollect when you open it that it is a dead man who is speaking—a man who has been your friend."

Again I promised, and taking the envelope gave him my firm hand-grasp.

"To-morrow I leave Euston for New York on a very long journey. Ah Leyland! you are the only person who knows of my burden of sorrow—you are the only man in whom I can implicitly place my trust."

A tear stood in my friend's eye, and my heart went out towards him. My position there was painful, and I was glad when I could excuse myself, yet not before Watzdorf's wife, her eyes showing traces of tears, returned, and her hunted husband said in a tender voice, his hand upon his wife's shoulder:

"Louise, my love, if anything occurs to me, our friend, Mr. Leyland, will act in your interests. I have given him the documents that I prepared."

In a calm, sweet voice Madame expressed her heartfelt thanks, and, shaking both their hands, I went forth into the hall, where the white-haired old butler assisted me.

"I will write you, Leyland, as soon as I land!" cried Watzdorf after me. "Good-by!"

Then I went forth into the dark, deserted road, and walked through several long streets with which I was entirely unacquainted until I found myself in Cromwell Road. Then, and only then, did it suddenly flash across my mind that I had taken no note of either the road or the house where lived the Wanderer's wife!

One Saturday night in June last year I was back in my own rooms in Guilford Street, resting after some secret inquiries in Belgrade, when by the last post came a letter, dated from an unknown hotel in the Euston Road, asking me to call there as soon as possible, and signed "Heinrich Watzdorf."

All the recollections of those strange incidents of the past crowded upon me, and, anxious to again meet the man who had once befriended me, I lost no time in going to the address given.

The place consisted of two dingy private houses that had been turned into an hotel, and when I asked for my friend a slatternly maid-servant showed me up to No. 6, a room on the second floor.

A light was burning within, and I rapped at the door. Then I turned the handle and, finding the door unlocked, entered.

The room was very poorly furnished, and crouched in a heap on the bed lay my friend, fully dressed, still wearing the black spectacles—but dead!

The sensation this discovery created, the arrival of the police, and other similar circumstances need not be here described. Suffice it to say that at the inquest held on the following day I gave evidence of identification, while the police-surgeon certified that death was due to heart-disease.

From my bank I obtained the sealed packet, and alone in my room I broke it open and examined its contents. What was written therein held me astounded.

The words he had penned placed me on the track of a remarkable secret—one that had for years been hidden from the world. Feeling that no time should be lost, I made certain inquiries at the Foreign Office, and then left London that same night for Germany. Three nights later, after travelling by Mulhausen and Weimar, I arrived at the great Castle of Tautenburg, that magnificent place, half fortress, half palace, perched high above the winding Saale, one of the many residences of his Serene Highness the Grand-Duke Frederic of Saxe-Schwabourgh, the wealthiest and most influential ruler in the Thuringian States.

My demand to have audience of his Highness was received with some surprise by the Chamberlain, but I produced a certain paper from the sealed packet and, placing it in an envelope as the dead man had directed, requested the official to hand it to his master. This was done, whereupon I was at once admitted to the cosy private cabinet wherein stood awaiting me the Grand-Duke himself—a tall, dark-bearded man about forty-five, in handsome uniform and wearing the Black Eagle and the Russian Order of St. Andrew, for an official dinner had just ended.

He started the instant he set eyes upon me, while my surprise was quite equal to his, for his face was the exact counterpart of my dead friend Watzdorf's!

His brows knit themselves, and he inquired my name sharply in English.

"I am George Leyland, your Highness, of his Britannic Majesty's diplomatic service."

"Leyland!" he repeated, still suspicious. "Well, why, pray, have you asked audience of me?"

"To deliver to you this packet," I answered. And drawing from my overcoat a sealed envelope which had been contained in the larger one Watzdorf had given me I handed it to him. His fingers trembled as he opened it, and his thin, gray face grew paler.

He motioned me to a chair, and then, seating himself at the writing-table, broke the seals and read the contents.

"Then poor Heinrich is dead!" he exclaimed, with voice hoarse with emotion as he turned to me. "My poor brother!" he repeated. "My poor brother! Ah Mr. Leyland, this is indeed sad. Forgive me for doubting you, but I had reason to think that you were none other than the man who had ruined his life, Louis de Castelane—the enemy of my house. You are exactly like him—almost his double, I think. But tell me all that you know of poor Heinrich, and of the unfortunate Princess, his wife."

And while the Grand-Duke sat listening, sighing now and then, I told him all, just as I have written it down here.

Then, when I had finished, I asked his Highness to supplement the facts of which I was already in possession—the facts contained in my dead friend's letter. First extracting from me a promise of secrecy, he then explained that the man whom I had known as Watzdorf was none other than his elder brother, Prince Heinrich Charles Alexander Hermann, of Saxe-Schwazbourg, who for eleven years had been missing, and who was believed by the world to have committed suicide under very tragic circumstances.

It appeared that eleven years ago their father, the Grand-Duke George, was still alive, and on Heinrich announcing his intention of marrying her Serene Highness the Princess Feodore-Louise of Weimar-Lippe, the proud old ruler would not hear of such an alliance. Between the Grand-Duchies had existed a deadly feud for generations, and Heinrich's intention being bruited abroad, political excitement ran very high and a serious conspiracy was formed to prevent the alliance. Prince Heinrich, heir to the Grand-Duchy, was, however, devoted to the Princess Feodore, and after a very stormy scene with the reigning Grand-Duke left the Palace and was married in Berlin. The same day that news of the marriage reached Tautenburg the ruler issued a proclamation condemning his son's actions in strongest terms, whereupon a hot-headed young Frenchman named Louis de Castelane, a fierce partisan of Heinrich's, assassinated the Grand-Duke by deliberately shooting him with a rifle as he rode home from hunting, afterwards escaping into the forest.

It seemed that Heinrich had secretly countenanced a conspiracy by which his father was to be forced to abdicate, and that he should succeed, but he had no idea that the Grand-Duke was to be shot. He was, however, morally responsible for his father's death, and when the news reached him two days later in Vienna, whither he had gone with his bride, he was so overcome with remorse that he resolved never to return again to Saxe-Schwazbourg, and hit upon the device of pretending to commit suicide and afterwards effacing the identity of both himself and his wife, in order to allow his brother to succeed him. This he accomplished. Some of his clothing and valuables were discovered next day on the bank of the Danube about six miles from Vienna, the papers announced his death, and from that moment until the present nothing had been seen or heard of either husband or wife.

The secret organizations of which Louis de Castelane was the tool were, however, unconvinced of Heinrich's death, and for years had been actively engaged in trying to discover traces of the Prince or his wife. Knowledge that they were being continually hunted had evidently kept the pair apart, for while the Princess Feodore had lived a

lonely life in London, Heinrich travelled constantly in order to avoid the inquiries of both partisans and enemies. It has since been proved that the only person aware of the secret of Heinrich's continued existence was the present Czar, who had been one of his most intimate friends, and to my friend's personal intercession I, of course, attribute my mysterious release from prison in Petersburg. My personal resemblance to the political agitator, Castelane,—who, by the way, died in Paris a year ago,—was the reason of Heinrich's surprise on our first encounter, for he at first believed that he had been recognized.

His Serene Highness, in acknowledgment of my promise of secrecy, took me entirely into his confidence, and, as he gave me further details of the strange romance, showed me certain passages the dead man had written which proved how deeply both he and his bride had suffered in their continual estrangement.

The chief and most important document, however, that I had given into his hand was the certificate of the birth in London ten years ago of little Prince Heinrich, who was, of course, none other than the actual Hereditary Grand-Duke of Saxe-Schwazbourg.

I need, I think, give no actual details of my long, eager search for the widowed Princess in London at his Serene Highness's request, nor of how I at last discovered that the quiet thoroughfare where she lived in Earl's Court was Pembroke Road, and of how I ultimately found her living at Sheringham, in Norfolk, with her little son and utterly ignorant of the sudden decease of the man she so dearly loved.

The scene when I broke the news to her was too sad to be described here.

Suffice it to say that after a year of mourning she has now resumed her title, and with her son lives at the Castle of Tautenburg, which the reigning Grand-Duke has given up for her use and where I have quite recently been her guest.

I noticed in the papers the other day a rumor that she will probably marry a son of the royal house of Savoy, but I may add that I have reason to know that she will never remarry, her whole life being devoted to the education of her little, round-faced Heinrich, who, on the death of his uncle, will become one of the most wealthy and influential of the Grand-Dukes of Europe.

The other day, before I left the Castle, her Serene Highness presented me with a relic of her devoted and well-beloved husband, the signet-ring of his royal house, which he had worn until that day when sorrow and remorse had fallen upon him. The ring, an antique gold one, is now upon my finger, a souvenir of the man who, knowing that death must overtake him suddenly, singled me out as his friend—The Man with the Black Spectacles.

CUPID IN THE HORSE-CAMP

By Edward Boltwood



I.

"HOW often must I tell you this, Rose? How often must I ask you? And won't you answer?"

"No—unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you make me."

Young Barrett looked helplessly at the challenge dancing in Miss Carson's gray eyes, and lashed his boot with a riding-crop.

"An Eastern riding-crop in the Dakota Bad Lands!" said the girl, with an airy change of subject. "I'm perplexed that brother Jack permits such a thing on our ranch."

Indeed, the situation that autumn at the Cross-F Ranch was one of perplexity all around. Jack Carson's friend Barrett had come out from New York to learn the business and, if he liked it, to buy a share in the Cross-F herd. Unsuspected by Carson, Barrett had straightway fallen in love with Rose, and there was no prospect of his ever falling out. Therefore Barrett wouldn't decide the business question, and this perplexed Jack. Rose wouldn't decide the matrimonial question, and this perplexed Barrett. Barrett couldn't compel her to decide it, and this secretly perplexed Rose far more than she was willing to confess. If Barrett suffered from her instinctive, unaffected coquetry, she herself was suffering in the same cause.

Rose Carson was straight as a Black Hills pine; in her handsome face lived a defiant spirit which sometimes flashed a bewildering message to Barrett, "Oh my lover, make me acknowledge that I love you!" She was good to look upon. So, for that matter, was Barrett. From every worldly point of view the match was logical, which was, perhaps, the reason why it was drifting into the clouds of impossibility.

"I can't take a pistol to your head. If I knew how to force you to say yes or no, don't you think I'd do it?" he demanded desperately.

"I don't see the need of yes or no—yet," said Miss Carson. "You know you can be so philosophical about it."

To tell the truth, Barrett's calm philosophy irritated her not a little. It was painfully un-Western.

II.

EARLY in November Carson smelled snow, and sent Barrett miles away up Medicine Creek to tend the horse-camp until April. There Barrett met Sweetie McCue for the first time. The men lived in a grimy dug-out, burrowed into the south slant of a hillside, and morning and evening they rode the long circuit of the barbed-wire pasture fence. Whenever the grass was frost-killed they pitched hay sparingly from the enormous brown stacks into the hay-corral, while the two hundred shelterless ponies squealed and fought at the barrier.

The isolation soothed Barrett's Eastern sentimentality. Miss Carson was spending the winter with her brother at the ranch, nearly a day's ride distant.

Barrett brought ten pounds of Durham to the horse-camp, to which store of solace he bade McCue welcome. The grizzled cow-puncher, after the fine custom of his kind, thanked Barrett by deed and not by word: he quietly took upon himself the duties of their simple cookery. When Barrett objected to this Sweetie said:

"You kin have yer shift later on, young feller. Reckon you'll be glad of it too, come spring. I was in horse-camps afore."

McCue produced a tattered pack of cards. They played pitch for coffee-beans until they could tell by its back every card of the fifty-two. Then in the middle of a game Barrett threw down his hand and complained of the lantern light. McCue recognized the symptoms and in silence wrapped up the pack for the winter. At sunrise McCue called from his blankets,—

"Yer turn to fry the chuck, mister," and Barrett jumped to the cooking with glad relief.

Once McCue found Barrett ransacking his clothes-bag.

"Lost whatever?" asked Sweetie.

"No," said Barrett, "I was just looking for something to read."

That night, while Barrett lingered over the dish-washing, McCue, disdaining a prelude, burst into the ballad of "The Old Texas Trail." There are thirty-six verses to this diverting epic, and McCue bawled them relentlessly, squaring his lumpy shoulders to the task. He was an enormous, raw-boned man, with very dull eyes and an ominous angle to his jaw,—

"In a narrer grave,
Just six by three,
They buried him there,
On the lone prairie."

This started the story-telling. McCue's yarns were in the ballad form, which survives in its purity in the fore-castle and about the round-up wagon. His list was not large—"The Cottonwood Cabin," "The Girl in San Antone," "The Arizona Vagabound,"—

Cupid in the Horse-Camp

"And so I tells you, stranger,
When you asks who I am,
That a Arizona Vagabound
Ain't worth a damn."

The songs reeked with melancholy. Barrett tried to remember cheering anecdotes from "Pickwick" or "Charles O'Malley." Sweetie listened with solemn courtesy, but it was apparent that he was untouched. Every story was to him a serious reality, and from his standpoint Sam Weller, in Barrett's bald narrative, was merely an insignificant and somewhat weak-minded bunco man, who would have been kicked summarily out of any cow-camp on the Belle Fourche.

"I know a story about a fellow and a girl," said Barrett one morning. He had ascertained that Sweetie was not aware of Miss Carson's existence.

"Let her go," responded McCue politely.

"He loved her, and she loved him, and she couldn't make up her mind. So he went away——"

"Pull in right there. What fer couldn't she make up her mind?"

"Because they agreed that they were—oh, different."

"Huh," commented McCue. "Kinder ornery, ain't it? What was the names o' that outfit?"

"The girl's name was Rose—Rosabella," Barrett said.

"Well, the feller must 'a' been a Mexican."

"Why?"

"'Cause he didn't have no sand in his neck," replied Sweetie. "'Cause he'd oughter 'a' married that gal on the jump-off. He wanted her, didn't he? She wanted him, didn't she? Then——"

"She couldn't decide, I tell you."

McCue wagged his bristling head, unable to express himself, but after supper the debate was resumed.

"Now, about that there Rosabella," said McCue almost fiercely. "I'd 'a' took and waltzed her off to a parson, way she'd like fer to have me do. Else, by the crackin' Jingo! she'd give me the why not, good and flat and no copper on the card. She wouldn't keep little old McCue a-danglin' like a locoed calf, not if I had the courtin' of her."

"Suppose we two were courting her," said Barrett. The whimsicality of the contention laid strong hold on him. "Suppose we were courting her. I play the waiting game and you the other. Well, she won't answer, and she argues——"

"Argues!" shouted McCue. "To red blazes with argues! I'd just nat'rally rear up and get action." The two lonely men pounced upon the controversy with increasing eagerness.

Occasionally the snow fell in malicious flurries, but it thawed as speedily. Barrett hoped for the diversion of a physical hardship, and

hoped in vain. To find a break in the fence was an excitement long remembered, and sometimes a herd of steers, wild from cold and starvation, would burst through the barbed wire into the pasture and must be driven out. In the weary intervals between these pastimes the pair fell back on the drama of Rosabella.

"I seen her to-day," McCue might remark. "Rosabella! Ain't that a high-priced name, though? Her and me had a chin while you was gone."

And Barrett would answer: "But, of course, you settled nothing. How could you? She's only flirting with herself and us."

In these fantastic arguments Sweetie was no match for Barrett's imaginative facility. Barrett would not have been so ingenious had he been experienced in the mental freaks of solitude. The Easterner goaded his dull-eyed comrade to strange frenzies by dwelling on Rosabella's obstinate and unyielding coquetry. McCue would stick out his jaw and growl:

"You keep yer shirt on. 'I'll show you how much this dang flirting's good fer. Rosabella, she's plumb got to choose her brand."

During January a chill drizzle of rain set in, holding the men in their kennel for three days, during which they wrangled incessantly, if jocosely, about Rosabella. On the third morning Barrett noted that McCue had provided an extra plate at breakfast.

"Expecting company?" queried Barrett.

"I reckoned she might drop in to talk it over," said McCue. Then he laughed a trifle foolishly, tossed back the plate into the dish-box, and lumbered to the door.

"Weather's on the change," he observed. "Say, Barrett, this stacks up like a norther."

By noon the wind shifted and the rain became a whipping sleet.

"We're sure in fer it," declared Sweetie. "Did you see the ponies?"

"No."

"They'd oughter be at the corral without no drivin' now. Come on to the stack."

They threw down the fodder in the lee of the stout log fence of the corral. Every now and then McCue would straighten up, wipe the hail from his face, and stare into the swelling storm.

"Where's that fool bunch?" he grumbled.

"Oh, the horses'll come in," said Barrett. "They know what's good for 'em."

"If they kin see the way, they'll come in. This here'll turn a blizzard d'reckly," went on McCue in an injured tone, "and them critters—I'll chase along the creek and round 'em up. You keep on a-pitchin'."

At the end of his lively task Barrett realized for the first time the rigor of the cold. The sleet had whitened into snow, which the wind whirled horizontally, in vast, stinging, blinding clouds, apparently destined never to reach the ground.

Barrett piled up the firewood and sat down to wait for his companion. The titanic fury of the norther began to numb his wits; he felt like an unthinking beast in a hole. He stooped beyond the door and emptied his revolver, and reloaded for another volley, hoping that the shots might give a signal. After an hour McCue staggered in.

There was a cruel bruise on his temple, as if he had fallen from the bluff, and he was dazed with the brain-stealing grip of frost. He looked puzzled and gently grateful when Barrett pulled off his stiff coat.

"Pretty cold," he sighed, finding speech slowly. "Guess I'll—go—sleep."

"There'll be hot stew in a minute," said Barrett.

McCue blinked doubtfully.

"Can't sleep," he continued, "till I see that there gal," and, to Barrett's amazement, he threw open the door.

"The gal's out yonder where I was," he cried. "I just been talkin' with her."

"What girl?"

"Rosabella."

Barrett glanced up sharply. McCue stood stalwart and erect, shoving his powerful arms into the sleeves of his overcoat. His chin was set and his eyes flaming, but the force of his bearing lay in a resolute calmness which made Barrett wince.

"Why, Mac, there isn't a woman within ten miles," said Barrett. "Stop your kidding. This isn't good weather for—— Mac, for Heaven's sake, think!"

"I'm through thinkin'. Rosabella's ready to speak out. I'm goin' down the creek to see her again."

Barrett dodged forward and tried to throw him. McCue crunched Barrett in his elbow and flung him to the floor. Barrett clutched the giant's knee; Sweetie shook loose and picked up Barrett's loaded pistol from the bunk. There was no ferocity, no harmful intent, in the struggle. Sweetie was merely defending himself.

"Come with me if you wants," he said placidly. "Only come peaceable. We'll make a' excursion, me and you."

The younger man was strong and undaunted; he wrenched with all his muscle at the madman's wrist. McCue wound his big fingers in Barrett's collar and dragged him into the blizzard, breasting the wind with the sullen power of a mighty machine.

III.

At the cosey ranch-house of the Cross-F Miss Rose killed the winter days agreeably enough in her brother's company. The problem of her feeling towards Barrett was shelved. It was obviously a problem of no present importance.

On a certain misty morning in January she marched to the stable and flung a saddle on her favorite horse. For seventy-two hours of drizzling rain they had both been weather-bound.

"Where to, Rose?" called Carson.

"Wherever Hot Cakes will carry me," said the girl.

"He'd jump Sundance Butte if you'd let him. Look out for yourself. The weather isn't much."

Rose laughed at the powerful spring of the pony, at the swish of the fog on her face, at the eager pull of the bridle-reins. Hot Cakes steadied into a mile-devouring gallop, the yellow mist began to roll away before the wind, and the air took on a sting that nipped her cheeks pleasantly. "You're slow for me, Hot Cakes," she cried, waving her quirt. "This is no New Yorker you're carrying."

The first scurry of snow found Rose beyond Medicine Bottom on the Belle Fourche. Of what could she have been thinking? Hot Cakes swung his back against the moaning wind and puffed hard into the sage-brush. A sober glance at the thick north told Miss Carson that there was no time to lose. The river must guide her to the ranch-house and, at the worst, Hot Cakes was fairly sure unguided to find his friends.

But it is difficult to follow the Belle Fourche in a snowstorm. Involuntarily the horse veered in the direction of the wind. The river was out of sight in the whirling clouds.

"We won't be fools now, Hot Cakes," said Rose. "Don't lose your head, old boy."

The pony trudged forward with such a cock-sure confidence that Rose took comfort from the resolute tip of his ears. Hot Cakes knew where he was going if ever horse did. After all, the first creek would probably lead to refuge of some kind. Rose reflected grimly how Jack would swear at her stupidity, and how Barrett would laugh at her chagrin. When Hot Cakes slipped into a cut towards a water-course these pictures became vivid. Here unmistakably was Medicine Creek.

To the right, against the freezing blasts, lay the river and the ranch. But Hot Cakes twitched persistently the other way. "Trust a good horse" is a cattleman's maxim. To the left there was the protection of high clay banks and less block of snow. Rose tried to reason. Her brain seemed drowsy. She dropped from the saddle, wound an arm in the stirrup leather, and plodded a-foot up the creek beside her pony.

Cupid in the Horse-Camp

What was that beyond the dim turn of the shrouded bluff? A pair of ghostly cottonwood stumps, maybe, or gateposts: if the latter, a granger's shack might be close at hand, or——

"Howdy, Rosabella," saluted the larger ghost gravely, as if expecting her.

"Oh, how do you do?" panted Miss Carson. Was her brain, then, finally asleep and dreaming?

The other spectral figure lurched forward.

"Rose!" it exclaimed with the voice of Barrett.

Miss Carson laughed weakly. Of course, she was at the horse-camp. These people were real, and one of them she was very glad to see.

"Hot Cakes and I are rather tired," she said. "We lost our way, and if you'll give me a lift——"

Barrett stretched out his arms. But the big stranger waved Barrett back with something he held. Rose looked twice; it was a long revolver.

"Nothin's goin' to happen you, Rosabella," said this towering creature. "But we got to kinder round-up and settle yer brand. It'll take no more'n a half minute fer you to speak."

"McCue, for God's sake!" expostulated Barrett. "Can't you see she's worn out—perhaps dying? McCue, we must save her!"

"It'll take no more'n a half minute," repeated Sweetie earnestly, covering Barrett with the muzzle of the forty-five, "and the longer you chew, the colder she gets."

"But I don't think that I understand," stammered the girl to Barrett.

"Oh, this is McCue. He's sick in the head. He talks queer."

"If you mean I'm sick o' talkin', you're c'rreck," snarled McCue, with dangerous and growing wrath. "Rosabella, this here's Ned Barrett, a fine boy, a' elegant fine boy. He loves you. I loves you—me, McCue, a good man." He took off his hat solemnly. "It's up to you, lady. Throw both of us down if you wants to, but do business P. D. Q."

"Let's push for camp first," suggested Barrett warily, "and think it over."

"Yes, let me wait, Mr. Mac," gasped Rose.

"Wait nothin'," roared Sweetie. "Yes er no. We'll stand fer either one. We're men."

Miss Carson stared at him in desperation. She felt the curious contagion of insanity. This passionate brute of the storm, with his square, masterful face, seemed to take her to a passionate, stormy world of his own making, inhabited solely by her and Ned Barrett and himself; the trio stood in a white, wind-swept universe, with only the

essential emotions for company. To temporize in this forcible monster's world was as incongruous as to coquette with a volcano. For the first time she seemed to read her heart, clear, plain, and simple, and there was no problem there at all.

Rose turned to Barrett and extended her hands to him, naturally and impulsively.

"Yes, Ned!" she said. It never occurred to her to do or say anything else.

"That'll hold, I reckon," announced the giant, and jammed on his sombrero. "Now we kin pull freight. But, hold on!" He paused, deliberating. "Seems like you'd have to kiss him up some, Rosabella, to bind this here compact."

Rose drew back. The apprehensive, half-insulted appeal in her look strained Barrett's discretion to the snapping-point.

"You crazy coward," he cried, "how dare you——"

"I shoot fer less'n coward."

"Shoot, then."

Barrett leaped straight for the pistol. A shell cracked and his shoulder burned. He locked himself to McCue's waist. They fell: Sweetie rained blows with a sledge-hammer fist, all the stars of creation sang in Barrett's skull, but he held on, reaching for a throat grip, and over the tumult he began to hear Rose's voice: "Hands up, McCue! Hands up!" Then he was released. He jumped to his feet.

McCue knelt in the snow with his arms uplifted. Rose stood over him, pointing the revolver.

"You surely has the drop, Ma'am," mumbled Sweetie. "What fer—what fer—I don't remember"—and he winked sadly, like a whimpering boy.

"Oh Ned," Rose said, resigning the pistol to Barrett,—“oh Ned, would you rather be shot than kiss the girl who—who chose you?”

She caught her breath and leaned, sobbing, against Hot Cake's flank. Barrett raised her to the saddle. McCue tottered up; the shock of the encounter had plunged him in a trance; he was lost and pitiful and must be led by the hand, child-fashion, while they ploughed to the horse-camp. Once inside the door he fainted on his blankets and lay unconscious.

"Rose, I shall make you answer now," said Barrett as they watched the wood-fire kindle. "Poor old Mac taught me that. You saved my unworthy life, and it belongs to you, such as it is."

It was not alone the firelight which glowed on Miss Carson's face.

"I have answered. I want to take back nothing," she said softly, "although a proposal with a temporary lunatic and a forty-five revolver is not usual, even in the Bad Lands."

IV.

THE storm died before sunset, and the moon came up full and clear. Barrett waded out and found the ponies, snorting defiance at the drifts. When he returned Rose was making coffee, and McCue, over the edge of his blankets, was glaring at her, panic-stricken.

"Who's that-a-one? When did she blow in?" he whispered to Barrett. His eyes were dull once more and he was entirely rational.

"Why, that's Rosabella," said Barrett.

"Rosabella, hey? Never heard such a fancy name as those. Sounds like a sleepin'-car. Say, I couldn't find them horses and I took a fall. How'd you skin yer shoulder? Did you pack me into camp, pardner? I disremember." Sweetie rubbed his head and regarded Miss Carson with much suspicion.

"I'm going to ride with that lady to the ranch," Barrett said. "We can reach it by midnight easily. But how about leaving you alone? You won't go down the creek making love a second time, will you?"

"Look-a-here, I guess you're loony," retorted McCue. "Some folks go queer for a while in a norther. I'm all right, Barrett. Go on with Rosa—what's that fool name again?"

Barrett's attempted explanation convinced McCue that his companion's mind was unhinged. The conviction was strengthened in the spring, when Sweetie received an invitation to Miss Carson's wedding. It was addressed to "Mr. McCupid."

"Well, I'm damned!" he observed. "McCue-pid! And what have I got to do with weddin's nohow?"



SONG FOR A SUMMER TWILIGHT

BY CLINTON SCOLLARD

WHEN the primrose of eve parts the green of its husk,
And the great primrose moon flowers above in the sky,
I long (how I long!) for her face in the dusk,
And her voice to my voice making loving reply.

Ah, I know she will come by the bird on the bough,
And I know she will come by the clear cricket chirr;
Ah, I know she will come,—she is nearing me now!—
By the breath of the night blent of attar and myrrh!

A moment—and then will be paradise won;
Hark the beat on the grass of her hastening feet!
As a lily that leans towards its lover, the sun,
Are her lips lifted up—O my sweet! O my sweet!

"FOR A' THAT"

By Clinton Dangerfield



"SIRE," whispered an agitated attendant, quite unmoved by the beauty of the landscape lying so placidly in the evening sunshine, "Sire, your Majesty terrifies me by this familiarity with an unknown American, even though you think he does not guess your rank. For a week your Majesty has met him here on this shore and compelled me to leave you—yet who knows but he may be an anarchist?—a murderer? His country is most impossible."

"And who knows," interrupted the King angrily, "but that the moon may be made of green cheese? or the cup of coffee I had this morning of poison? One is as much worth speculating on as the other. Kindly withdraw, my Lord, he is coming. Console yourself by the knowledge that this is the last time I meet him, for to-morrow I go back to"—he hesitated a second and then added—"to the usual damned routine!"

The courtier, he was a duke with an income worthy of his rank, looked sincerely shocked, but he went away.

"It is certainly a touch of madness in him," he muttered to himself, "this desire to meet a commoner on the man's own level! We all know insanity has been in his family."

Meantime Hollingsworth, frank-eyed and smiling, had joined the King.

"Guten tag, mein Freund," said the American gayly as he came up. "Hear how my accent improves, in spite of the complications of your tangled tongue. But you are solemn this evening. You should have gotten up at dawn, as I did, and have had a dip with me in the ocean. Everything looked as fresh as new-mown hay."

His companion looked at him curiously.

"How have you managed to keep all that enthusiasm? Is life so easy on a—what do you call it?—ranch?"

The American stared. "Well, you don't know much of life!" he said, laughing. "Is life easy on a ranch? I reckon not! But what's the use of going over past troubles now? You see, I actually made something over expenses last year, so here I am, taking the first vacation I ever had. Great country this." Then, irrelevantly, he added: "Odd we two should have struck up a friendship, isn't it? I suppose it's because we are opposites. You have a kind of melancholy about you

that I seem to like, I don't know why!" He threw himself on the sand and the other sat down beside him, while in the distance the courtier watched them surreptitiously by the aid of a powerful glass. The latter was not particularly attached to his royal master, but the change of dynasty which must occur at the present King's death was likely to prove highly prejudicial to his individual interests, therefore he scanned the American's face keenly for possible indications of murderous intents.

Hollingsworth was lazily throwing pebbles into the surf, trying to make them skim the feathery line, with the same suggestion of resolute and nervous force which shone through all he did.

"Do you know," said his friend slowly, "that this is our last meeting? To-morrow I must go home."

"I wish you could have another week here, but I suppose your business is imperative?"

"I am told so," said the other dryly.

"I don't want to be inquisitive," said the American hesitatingly, "but I noticed yesterday, and again to-day, that you were looking pretty serious. No offence, but is business all right with you?"

"It is not!" said his companion gloomily, visions of an argumentative Premier and a clamorous people rising before him. "It never is! As soon as I get one snarl straightened out there is another ready."

"Just so!" said Hollingsworth cheerfully, but with kindly sympathy in his voice. "Know how it is exactly. Been there myself, many a time! On my place in Texas I found that each fellow, from the foreman to Hung Chang, the cook, had his pet particular grievance ready at all hours—and the changes in the market were the devil."

"I suppose so," admitted his friend a little absently, then suddenly becoming aware of a warm, strong hand laid on his shoulder.

"See here, old fellow," said Hollingsworth, plunging in, "I told you I made a little haul before I left home—wish for your sake it was bigger. Now, you mustn't get too blue—all of us get it in the neck occasionally. And so—that is—I mean—oh, hang it! If you want a check for a couple of hundred, say the word and it's yours."

His friend, who had finally lain at ease on the sand, now sat up so suddenly and with such a flush on his cheek that the Texan feared he had given mortal offence.

Perplexity succeeded dismay with the American when he saw how piercingly the other was gazing at him.

"You know all," said his companion accusingly, "and you think that by this you will——"

"Stop!" said the American imperatively. "If you've done anything wrong, I don't want to hear it. What you use the money for is no affair of mine. I like you, and that's enough for me. I sha'n't miss the check: it only means skipping Monte Carlo, and I reckon I've no busi-

ness there, anyway. As to the check, I—er—that is—I made it out for you this morning."

He drew the slip of paper awkwardly from his bill-book and quickly slipped in into the other's pocket.

"You mean," said his new-found friend a little hoarsely, "that you give me this expecting no return? You have really done it because you liked me, and not because you hoped for an exchange?"

The American looked in sheer astonishment into the other's eyes. He saw tears there, and they embarrassed him, but he said frankly:

"Look here, Ehrenfeld,"—the name given by his companion was that of one of his numerous estates,—"you must be in a mighty queer profession and meeting mighty crooked men if you've such a poor estimate of human nature that you think a fellow can't be civil without fishing for his neighbor's goods. You drop that idea, and get away from the folks who gave it to you."

"If I cannot get away from them," said his friend slowly, "I can at least remember always that once in my life a service, a disinterested service, was rendered me."

"What you need is a good shaking up," said the Texan decidedly. "Your liver's out of order—that's what's the matter with Han—with you, I mean. See that apple on that solitary tree over yonder? Come along, and we'll race for it. Here, don't sprawl your elbows out that way—hold them so! Now, ready! Off!"

His boyishness was irresistible. They ran frantically towards the prize, a gnarled and wormy specimen on a dilapidated tree. The King desired to win it as he had never desired the rich principalities won for him by his generals. Out of sheer good-nature the Texan let him gain it, amused to see the triumph shining in the winner's face as he divided the not very desirable fruit, while the Duke found himself so nearly on the verge of apoplexy that his shaking hand could scarcely support the field-glass. To the latter's relief his master sat down, panting, the American leaning idly against the apple-tree, carving a piece of the divided apple-core fantastically with his knife.

Presently, with recovered breath, the winner addressed him a little wistfully:

"Hollingsworth, do you merely assume this light-heartedness? Is it really true that you have nothing weighing on you?"

The Texan threw away the core with an impatient gesture; a shadow crossed his face. Even his clear brown eyes darkened as with a cloud.

"God knows," he muttered. "I never knew real trouble till I came here. But now——"

"Tell me." The exquisitely sympathetic inflections of the King's trained voice were not to be resisted. The Texan looked away a little shamefacedly.

"Don't laugh at me," he said hesitatingly, "but I—the truth is—I love a girl here and I can't get her. At least, I haven't been able so far," he added more cheerfully.

The King barely suppressed a smile. So long had the manifold cares of state weighed on him, that far, far in the background lingered the bygone fancies once drawing him towards true love—such love as his stifled life had never known. But the smile died unseen.

"Who is she, Hollingsworth?"

"Daughter of an old fellow who's worth a shocking lot of money, came in for a windfall—that is, er hat eine Erbschaft gemacht. Du verstehst?"

"Gewiss!" smiled his friend, quite untroubled by the familiar "thou."

"And he wants to buy a title with it. I don't think he'd care how poor the title is, just so it's 'von' something. Evidently, then, it would be a comedown to take a commoner for his son-in-law." He spoke lightly, but his eyes were full of passionate desire. "But, hang it! what's the use of talking about it? She won't leave him without his blessing, though I could dispense with it very comfortably."

"His name," suggested the other, "and he lives in——"

Hollingsworth answered indifferently. His friend might know the name if he liked. They were strangers and would never meet again.

They parted, to the intense relief of the watching courtier. The Texan stared regretfully after his whilom companion.

"Downright good company," he said half aloud. "Plagued pity he's hard up. Wish I had doubled that check, however it might have strapped me."

He turned to look at the vast waters, but found no consolation there.

"Lonely you came to the shore," they sang hoarsely, "and lonely you shall go away."

Johann Schmitt sat smoking his pipe over a dying fire. He was thinking gloomily that all his money had brought him no nearer his idea of paradise. Ah, to be addressed as "Baron," "the noble Herr Baron," to have panels on his coach decorated with his coat of arms, to see the people bowing before one, and to hear them exclaim, as one rolled away, "Welche pracht!" But the beautiful is ever the unattainable! If only——

Then a summons to the capital, thirty miles away, interrupted his dreams, and frightened him until his usual florid hue was almost purple. As he sped on in the train he leaned forward and grasped the officer's arm.

"Heiliger Herr," he stuttered, "am I in danger?"

A shrug, but no words, answered him.

When he stood before the King his limbs were weakening under him, and in his extremely commonplace fatness there was no hint of the beauty possessed by his daughter. That did not concern his royal master, who, besides, knew well enough what blossoms sometimes flourish on a gnarled stock.

"Herr Schmitt," he said abruptly, "I hear you are ambitious. You would acquire a title?"

Johann fell on his knees.

"Gracious Majesty," he faltered, "I meant no harm."

"Neither do I," said the King. "I am going to create you Baron *Lebenwohl*. To be sure, your estates will be of the barest, but you are rich enough to improve on them. You will be of particular importance, as you shall be the first of the name. Get up."

Johann staggered up, dazed with his good fortune. Then he straightened himself and let the news flow through his veins like wine. The shiver went out of his muscles, a suppressed arrogance flushed his red face.

"Sire," he said, "you overwhelm me with your beneficence! And if the treasury wishes a loan—without interest——"

"No loan," said the King abruptly. "I shall bestow this title on you so that your daughter may be worthy to marry Herr Hollingsworth, of Texas, who recently asked her hand. See that the nuptials are consummated at once."

"Gracious Majesty," he groaned, "what avails it to be a Baron if I must have a vulgar plebeian son-in-law? Unless," he added hopefully, "your condescension will ennoble him too!"

The King looked down on him, then glanced aside at the hawkfaced Duke, who stood near with biting scorn in his face for this new member of the aristocracy. Neither in his new creation nor in the self-satisfied courtier of years standing did the King find a hint of what he sought. Then with inward vision he saw again the hard, white sands, and pacing them the upright, clean-cut Texan, with his frank, mellow voice and unselfish, fearless eyes.

"No," he said quietly, "I cannot—ennoble him."

The peer-to-be withdrew, musing on his good and ill luck.

The King sat silently by the table, playing with a crumpled piece of paper on which ran a bold signature. Half bitter, half sad, were the lines around his mouth. Perhaps he wrestled with views of life which had never troubled him before.

"Sire," the Duke ventured smoothly, "the secret Ambassador from the Emperor, bearing messages of undying friendship for your Majesty, waits without."

The lines on the King's mouth trembled into a sardonic smile. He crushed the paper into his bosom and said wearily,—

"Let him come in."

THE OFFENDING EYE

By Ella Middleton Tybout

Author of "Ananias of Poketown," "An Unwilling Delilah," "The Ass that Vanquished Balaam," etc.



BROTHER NOAH HYATT, one of the chief pillars of the church, a member of the Sessions, a leader of class-meeting, and especially gifted in exhortation, had a certain peculiarity which was a matter of comment in Poketown. This was his apparent ability to fix one eye sternly upon an objective point while the other rolled independently about, seeking for new worlds to conquer. The stationary orb was light blue, while its roving companion was brown.

Brother Jacob Sutton was pondering upon this eccentricity of nature as the two men walked home from class-meeting one Friday night, and at last summoned courage to give utterance to his thoughts.

"Hit jes' entah meh mine, Brothah Hyatt," he remarked casually, "tuh wondah huccum yo' haid tuh suppoht a blue eye on de lef' an' a brown eye on de right. Hit done make yo' 'peah pow'ful exting'ished, tuh be sho'. Does yo' know huccum de Lawd tuh favah yo' dat-a-way?"

The brown eye of Brother Hyatt flashed angrily, in direct opposition to the pleasant smile of the blue member of the firm.

"Reckon He done hit fuh de same reason He tuck an' favah yo' wid one straight laig an' one bow laig," he returned indifferently, and Brother Sutton felt impelled to change the subject.

"De case o' James Pollahd am gwine tuh be laid befo' de chu'ch nex' class night," he remarked hastily; "yo' 'membahs dat he done tuck a paiah o' pants f'om de Jew sto' on Main Street, an' dey come an' 'rested him 'case dey seen him gwine tuh chu'ch in 'em."

"Dem plaid pants done lay him low fo' sho'," said Brother Hyatt reflectively.

"'Peahs like, bein' ez he done wuck out he time in jail, de sin am spashiated 'nuff," hinted Brother Sutton, who was inclined to be lenient.

"Ef plaid pants am de undoin' o' James Pollahd," said Brother Hyatt unctuously, "den he got tuh stick tuh plain goods. Sich am de konsekinse o' vanity."

"Po' James! 'Peahs like I kin see him now, standin' up in dem pants an' givin' in he sperience fuh de old yeah when dey tuck an' 'rested him," said Brother Sutton, indulging in momentary retrospection.

"De chu'ch," said Brother Hyatt severely as he paused at his own gate, "am obligated tuh sterminate sich acks. Dem whut 'dulges in cuss wo'ds had ought tuh slit dey tongues; dem whut takes de goods o' othahs had ought tuh chop dey han's offen dey body."

"Sof'ly, Brothah, sof'ly," ejaculated Mr. Sutton.

"Dem am de wo'ds o' de Book," affirmed Brother Hyatt, focussing his wandering eye upon the hands of his companion, which involuntarily sought the privacy of his pockets. "Kin yo' ahgify 'g'instant dat, Brothah Sutton?"

Brother Sutton could not. He therefore took his leave, and Mr. Hyatt entered his house and closed the door. Within those four walls he was monarch of all he surveyed, and he intended to remain so.

"Dem ez has 'scaped de clutches of a female woman, by de grace o' Gawd," he was wont to assert, "had bettah keep deyse'fs tuh deyse'fs, 'caze dey ain' no knowin' whut gwine tuh happen ef yo' gits tuh passin' de time o' day too frequent."

Almost simultaneously with closing the door he removed his left eye and placed it carefully in his waistcoat pocket, over the edge of which it smiled bravely on, a small blue island on a sea of white. The existence of this glass eye was the skeleton in the closet of Brother Hyatt, and he guarded the secret jealously. When bargaining for its purchase it had been suggested to him that perhaps brown would be a better choice than blue, owing to the prevailing custom of having such appendages to match when possible, but he had repudiated the suggestion with scorn.

"Whut yo' reckon I wants tuh git a brown eye fo'?" he demanded argumentatively. "Ain' I jes' done wo' one clean out? I's gwine tuh git a blue eye, dat's whut I's gwine tuh do."

And blue it was.

Going to his back door, Brother Hyatt opened it and surveyed the landscape. The quiet of an August night reigned supreme, and overhead the moon shone with enticing brilliancy. Beyond two adjoining fields an irregular dark outline was plainly visible. It was the watermelon patch of a neighboring truck farm.

Brother Jacob Sutton, after leaving his companion, paused at his own residence to procure an empty grain-sack. When one hunts one naturally carries a gamebag. Brother Sutton was bent on a still-hunt, and wished to be properly equipped.

"De speckled pullet ovah tuh de fahm mus' be 'bout at de fryin' aige now," he reflected as he climbed the fence.

And the speckled pullet, with several companions, soon fluttered uneasily in the seclusion of the grain-bag.

"Mought ez well come home thu de watahmillion patch," he reflected, his errand accomplished to his satisfaction.

The dew lay thick upon the vines, glistening brightly in the light of the moon, and scattered closely about the field were the melons themselves, large and luscious, and most tempting to the palate.

"Ovah in de cohnah by de crick," ruminated Mr. Sutton, "de sun shine wahmes' an' de fruit tas'e sweetes'."

Accordingly he repaired to the corner by the creek, bent upon refreshment of the inner man, but someone was before him. Brother Sutton hesitated an instant, then approached boldly.

"James Pollahd," he exclaimed sternly, "whut yo' doin' hyah?"

James Pollard, he of the plaid trousers, turned apprehensively around, then gave vent to a relieved chuckle.

"Clah tuh goodness," he remarked, "I done thunk hit whuh ole man Noahy Hyatt."

"James," said Brother Sutton solemnly, "yo' done lef' de jail yis-tidday; is yo' gwine tuh 'zume evil ackshuns 'mej'ate?"

The unhappy James entered into a rambling explanation of his reasons for the nocturnal expedition, but the attention of his companion wandered perceptibly as his eyes became fixed upon the partly consumed fruit at his feet.

"James," he interrupted suddenly, "am she ripe?"

Over the brow of the hill now appeared a third figure, walking slowly and stooping now and then to tap a melon inquiringly with thumb and finger.

"Pow'ful quare," he muttered; "I done make meh mahk on de top so's dey wouldn' be no trubble 'bout it. I done mahked it wid a cross an' 'lowed I'd come tuh-night an' git it."

Brother Hyatt paused in his search and listened intently. He heard a murmur of voices, which gradually grew more distinct. Hastily his hand sought his waistcoat pocket and fumbled there unavailingly: his eye was gone.

A famous general has said that the best mode of defence is by attack, and it is apparently true that great minds run in the same channels, for Brother Noah Hyatt promptly advanced to meet the enemy, with one hand held over the empty eyesocket and the other raised in stern denunciation.

"Brothah Sutton," he exclaimed, "whut yo' aftah, Brothah Sutton? Whuh yo' 'ligion, Brothah Sutton, whuh yo' 'ligion?"

Mr. Sutton pointed towards his companion, guiltily trembling at his side, clad in the identical plaid trousers which had occasioned his downfall, purchased and presented by a sympathizing friend upon his release from prison.

"I come hyah, Brothah Hyatt," he responded loftily, "tuh snatch

de brand f'om de burnin'. I done come tuh wras'le wid dis Son o' Sin an' Wickedness, an' tuh keep he feet f'om strayin' whuh dey done strayed befo'."

"Hope tuh die," stammered the wretched James, visions of the county jail rising vividly before his mind's eye,—“hope tuh die, Brothah Hyatt, I ain' done nawthin'. He tuck an' eat ez much ez me."

"James," said Brother Sutton in tones of patient reproach, "I zorts yo' not tuh add lyin' tuh yo' crap o' sins. Yo's got 'nuff tuh spashiate an' tuh sterminate 'thout dat, James."

"Ax him whut he got in he baig," muttered James, his knees knocking together as he encountered the brown eye of Brother Hyatt fixed upon him,—“ax him whut he got in he baig."

Brother Sutton shifted the bag to the other shoulder, and its occupants stirred uneasily as he did so.

"I got mus'rats in meh baig," returned Mr. Sutton promptly. "I done been down tuh de crick aftah mus'rats."

Mr. Hyatt passed to the rear and squeezed the bag between his hands; a muffled squawk resulted from the pressure.

"'Peahs like de lanwidge o' mus'rats done been changed sence yistidday," he remarked dryly as he replaced his hand before his eye and resumed his former location.

"Whut yo' doin' hyah yo'se'f, Brothah Hyatt?" inquired Mr. Sutton, rallying sufficiently to return the attack. "Kin yo' splain yo' own ackshuns?"

Brother Hyatt saw his way of escape and took immediate advantage of it.

"Brothah Sutton," he replied, "I done come hyah 'caze ole Satan he beckon me; dat's huccum me tuh be hyah. He done drug me ovah de fence an' tuck an' p'inted out de ripes' million in de patch. I sets meh eye on hit, Brothah Sutton, I sets meh eye on hit, an' I wants hit, y-a-a-s, I wants hit pow'ful bad. I couldn' git meh eye f'om offen hit nohow; de 'zire growed an' swelled in meh buzzom twell I feel fit tuh bus'. Whut yo' think I done, Brothah Sutton, whut yo' think I done?"

"Reckon yo' tuck an' cut de million," said Brother Sutton, speaking as from experience.

"No, sah," returned Brother Hyatt piously, "I didn' do dat nohow. I 'membahs de wo'ds o' de Book, 'if yo' eye offen' yo', pluck hit out an' cas' hit f'om yo', an' dat's whut I done, Brothah Sutton, dat's whut I done."

He dramatically removed his hand at the concluding word, and the eyelid collapsed into the cavernous socket presented for inspection. The two men gasped with astonishment, and Brother Hyatt resumed:

"She come out pow'ful hahd," he said pathetically; "dem roots

The Offending Eye

wuh sho'ly in good an' tight, but I kep' a-pullin',—y-a-a-s, I kep' a-pullin', 'caze I ain' gwine tuh suppoht no onruly membahs tuh my body. No, sah! I's gwine tuh cas' 'em f'om me. An' aftah I done fling dat sinful blue eye intuh de crick de Lawd come down in a ch'iot o' fiah an' stanch'd de bleedin' an' tuck away de huht. He sez tuh me, sez He, 'Well done, Noahy Hyatt!' sez He."

"I nevah hyah no sperience de ekil o' dat," said Mr. Sutton in awestruck tones.

"Does yo' still hone fuh de million, Brothah Hyatt?" inquired James Pollard curiously.

"James," said Brother Hyatt severely, "I tells yo' mighty solemn dat ef yo' reaches out yo' han' tuh tech dem millions (whut don' b'long tuh yo'), yo's gwine tuh see a' Eye lookin' at yo'. Dat Eye am wotchin' yo' cyahful, an' yo' kaint hide f'om hit nohow. Has yo' disremembah 'bout de All-Pervadin' Eye, Brothah Sutton? Huccum you do dat? Huccum yo', Brothah Sutton? Hit done been spyin' aftah yo' dis night. De Session am gwine tuh hyah 'bout dem mus'rats, sho's yo' bawn. Dey's somebody sides James Pollahd fo' de chu'ch tuh deal wid, Brothah Sutton."

With which concluding remark Mr. Hyatt turned and walked majestically away, complete master of the situation.

"James," said Mr. Sutton reproachfully when they were alone, "yo' didn' have no call tuh 'trac' 'tention tuh de baig, nohow."

"Has yo' got mus'rats in dat baig, sho' 'nuff?" asked James, who was an inquiring youth.

"I leaves yo' hyah, James, tuh yo' own 'fleckshuns; aftah whut yo' done 'pinionated 'bout dis baig, I reckon I don' wan' yo' s'ciety home nohow."

So saying, Brother Sutton walked sorrowfully off. His heart was heavy within him, owing to the unfortunate contretemps, and his soul was awed with the Spartan resistance of Brother Hyatt to the prompting of the devil. Gradually, however, he succumbed to the witchery of his surroundings and forgot everything but the fact that it was pleasant to be alive and to wander at will in a watermelon patch alone in the moonlight.

"Reckon I mought ez well tote one home tuh 'Cindy," he reflected, and looked about him preparatory to a careful selection. The dew shone white and sparkling upon the dark-green rind of his choice; it was necessary to push aside some leaves to find the stem, and Brother Sutton did so. With a loud yell of terror he jumped up and started to run, but caught his foot in the vine and fell heavily forward.

"De Eye!" he gasped, "de Eye!"

And, indeed, beneath the sheltering leaves a stern blue eye lay upon the ground and gazed up at him in silent accusation.

The countenance of Mr. Sutton was covered with an ashen bloom of fright, and large drops of perspiration stood out upon his brow as he stared fixedly at it, quite motionless from its irresistible magnetism. He felt it incumbent upon him to follow the example of Brother Hyatt, yet shrank weakly from the pruning process.

"Lawd," he gasped, moistening his trembling lips, "I knows whut yo' spec's me tuh take an' do. Meh eyes done res' 'pon de million, but, O Lawd, 'tain't one eye no mo' den t'othah. How I gwine tuh git 'long ef dey's bofe cas' out? I done seen hit lookin' up at me; I done seen dat Watchful Eye, Lawd, dat yo' keeps tuh sick on wicked pussons. Y-a-a-s, oh, y-a-a-s. I done seen it plain."

Here his breath failed for an instant, and the chickens in the bag upon his back stirred slightly.

"I's gwine tuh give dem chickins back, good Lawd," continued the uncertain voice; "I don' 'peah tuh cyah 'bout 'em nohow."

He sat cautiously upright and fumbled at the neck of the bag, finally shaking his prisoners out one by one.

"Git home," he cried, heading off first one and then another, as they rushed madly about after the manner of all chickens; "shoo! git outen meh sight. Shoo!"

The speckled pullet, spreading her wings until they touched the ground, started for home on the double-quick, followed by her companions, all squawking loudly. And Brother Sutton, with a hasty but apprehensive glance behind him, did likewise.

Now James Pollard, when left alone beside the creek, pondered thoughtfully upon the events of the evening without arriving at any definite conclusion; he was sadly puzzled.

"Ole man Noahy Hyatt nevah done pull out dat eye hisse'f nohow," he said aloud. "Yit, huccum dat hole in he haid?"

James scratched his own head thoughtfully as he finally started homeward. Heading wildly down the hill, and scuttling as though for their lives, came the speckled pullet and company.

"De mus'rats makin' fuh dey roos'," remarked James as he stood aside to let them pass, and then continued on his way, wondering greatly.

Observing what seemed to be an especially fine melon, he paused and bent over to examine it. What was that looking up at him from among the dark leaves? James's heart was in his mouth for a minute; then, gathering his courage together, he made the effort of his life, and putting forth a cautious finger touched the object, with fear and trembling at first, and then with curiosity and contempt.

James Pollard laughed long and loud as he disrespectfully thrust the accusing eye in the pocket of the plaid trousers, then quietly cut the

stem of the melon, placed it upon his shoulder, and proceeded on his way rejoicing until he reached the neighborhood of Brother Noah Hyatt, who sat in the shadow of an oak-tree refreshing himself with the produce of the field after the exhausting events of the night. He deeply regretted the loss of his eye, but felt that its absence would give him added prestige in class-meetings, therefore he bore it with fortitude.

"I's gwine tuh make 'em dance Juba nex' class-night," he reflected as he cut a large piece directly out the heart of the melon; "jes' let me git aftah 'em befo' de Session."

"I done pick up whut yo' drap a ways back," said the voice of James Pollard from behind the tree as he produced the glass eye. The lower jaw of Mr. Hyatt dropped with astonishment and he was speechless; James, however, was quite at his ease.

"I don' like dem stripy ones nohow," he remarked, turning over a bit of the rind with his foot, "dis yeah's de kine fuh me," and he deposited his burden upon the ground. Brother Hyatt pointed at the blue eye, which seemed to possess a far-away, unfamiliar look.

"Huccum," he gasped, "huccum——"

"Brothah Hyatt," said James, "I knows all 'bout yo', an' I's pow'-ful glad I does. I ain' gwine to expose yo' humbuggery, 'case I wants tuh git back intuh de bes' s'ciety of Poketown. Ef yo' he'ps me, I he'ps yo'."

James paused and looked searchingly at his companion.

"Ef de chu'ch take an' hol' out huh ahms tuh me, Brothah Hyatt, an' fuhgit de plaid pants an' de jail; ef de best s'ciety in Poketown am zorted tuh open de do' tuh me, I reckon de Lawd mought wuck a merrycle an' a' eye mought up an' spring out same ez Jonah's gourd tuck an' grewed in a night. 'Peahs like tuh me," added James enticingly, "I kin see hit sproutin' now."

"James," said Brother Hyatt, rising, "come home wid me an' go intuh meh back do'. De Lawd done favah yo' wid secon' sight, James."

There was a full attendance the next class-night, rumors of an unusual and interesting nature having excited the curiosity of Poketown to its highest point.

Brother Hyatt rose to address the meeting, and a stifled exclamation rose from Brother Jacob Sutton, who half rose to his feet, then sat down again.

"Brothah Sutton," said Brother Hyatt impressively, "I calls on yo' fo' yo' sperience las' Friday night, jes' aftah I done pull out meh lef' eye an' cas' hit f'om me 'caze hit res' too long on de goods o' othahs,—las' Friday night, Brothah Sutton, when yo' done went aftah mus'rats. Tell de chu'ch I's speechifyin' de truf 'bout dat eye."

And Brother Sutton, in faltering accents, testified that he had

met and conversed with Brother Hyatt when the eye was lacking. A thrill ran through the congregation as the story progressed with graphic details.

"James Pollahd," said Brother Hyatt, as Brother Sutton resumed his seat, "yo' done seen dat eye resto'ed tuh meh haid. Speak up now an' give in yo' sperience."

"Me an' Brothah Hyatt," said Mr. Pollard, "wuh settin' on he do'-step an' he wuh p'intin' out de way tuh heav'n tuh a po' sannah like me, when dey come a light, same ez de light when de meule stables on de towpath tuck fiah."

"Y-a-as! dey come a light. Praise Gawd!" interpolated Brother Hyatt.

"An' I done hyah a Voice outen de middle o' de light," resumed James; "hit say, 'Brothah Hyatt, de Lawd am pleased wid yo'. Hyah am yo' eye back ag'in, good ez new.'"

"An' den I done feel a ticklin' way back in de roots," said Brother Hyatt, taking up the thread of the discourse, "an' somethin' come a-bulgin' an' a-scrouchin' outen meh haid—glory! glory! hallelujah!—outen meh haid intuh de hole. Glory."

"De light done fade," said James solemnly, "an' I up an' sez tuh Brothah Hyatt, I sez, 'Yo' got yo' same ole eye back ag'in,' I sez."

"But 'twan't de same ole eye," interrupted Brother Hyatt, "'case I done see diff'unt wid hit. Dis hyah eye done been in glory, an' de way hit see now am de right way fo' sho'. Hit done tell me plain whut am de duty o' de chu'ch to'ds hits wanderin' lambs. I axes yo', meh brothahs an' meh sistahs, tuh welcome back James Pollahd tuh yo' midst; I zorts yo' tuh open yo' do's wide tuh him."

Brother Hyatt reached for the hand of James Pollard and led him forward before the pulpit.

"Brothah Sutton," he said, fixing that trembling gentleman with his brown eyes, "I knows dat you's gwine tuh be 'mongst de fust tuh welcome Brothah Pollahd back tuh de ahms o' de chu'ch."

But Brother Sutton shook his head solemnly and rose, as though to protest.

"Brothah Sutton," admonished Brother Hyatt, "'tain't no time tuh speechify 'bout mus'rats; I sho'ly would hate tuh be obligated tuh tell all I knows 'bout 'em dis night. Step up, Brothah Sutton, an' welcome de lamb back tuh de fole; step up lively now, an' set de zample tuh de res' o' de Session."

And Brother Sutton stepped.

THE VAGABOND ROAD

BY DORA READ GOODALE

FROM one town to another
 The staid, brown highway runs,
 Laid out by the good fathers,
 Trodden by us and our sons:
 This way passes the schoolboy,
 The countryman with his load,
 The bridegroom and bride,—
 A busy procession
 Of young hearts and old,—
 And none turns aside
 Or pines for the Vagabond Road.

Oh, the Vagabond Road, have you seen it?
 How describe it in words?
 Green, capricious, enchanting,
 Haunted by sweet-singing birds,
 Still pursuing its pleasure
 By rock, pasture, and fall,
 Escaping, ascending,
 Deploying—and, where
 I know not, but surely
 Deliciously ending
 (So be it!) in nothing at all.

Dusty and safe is the highway,
 Thrice respectable too;
 Here are clustered men's dwellings,
 Church and market in view.
 I, too, travel the turnpike
 And there fix my abode—
 Yet sometimes, perchance,
 I halt for a moment,
 When no one is by,
 And throw a long glance
 Far, far down the Vagabond Road.

ANOTHER MAN'S EXCUSES

By E. Spence de Pue



"THE drying up a single tear has more
Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore."

—BYRON: "Don Juan."

WHEN the air is so absolutely still that a feather will drop straight to the floor, and the atmospheric pressure is so great that you can almost feel the weight of it upon your shoulders, and the loose electricity gets upon your nerves and makes them jangle, then old residents of San Francisco say that it is earthquake weather. It was the tail-end of just such a day that Charlie Winton walked into Doctor Lambert's office and told his story.

It wasn't a pretty tale he had to tell, and yet, taken as a whole, there was nothing out of the ordinary about it. It was simply to the effect that he had allowed his affections to wander in directions not permitted of a husband and the respectable head of a family. And his wife had found him out.

Doctor Lambert listened impatiently and was unreasonably angry, considering the fact that it was none of his affair. But as there was no escape he was compelled to wait till the story was finished. Winton concluded as follows:

"You see, those infernal letters in my pocket gave the whole thing away. She gave me no opportunity to reply, spurned me, said something stagey about a broken heart, and vanished. I might have straightened things out had she given me a chance."

"Yes?" asked Doctor Lambert wearily. "I am very sorry—for her."

The palpably discouraging tone rather took Winton aback for a moment, but, not being an exquisitely sensitive mortal, he commenced again:

"You can help me out of the difficulty, Doctor, if you will."

"I can't see that there is any difficulty, Mr. Winton," Doctor Lambert replied very placidly, and with a narrowing of the eyelids.

"But don't you see that she will leave me?" he replied, gulping a little from excessive self-pity.

"What of it? According to your own statement of the case, you have been having a good time, you have been happy. Why should you

worry at the thought of her going away? In forming your plans you have never considered her, unless it were to what extent it would be necessary to practise deception. Why, my dear sir, so far as I can see, it would be a benefit to you to be rid of her. Then there will be no one to disarrange your plans. It will abolish the necessity for subterfuge and save you any amount of worry. It leaves you an absolutely clear coast."

"Hang it, Lambert, don't be nasty about the matter! I always thought that you were one of my best friends. There are the proprieties to be observed, you know. And then, if she should go away, there would be talk. And, after all, a man's home is his home," he concluded weakly.

For that speech he gained Doctor Lambert's lasting contempt. Even the bad half hour he had promised to give the man faded from his mind; he doubted whether he had a weapon that would reach a tender spot. However, assuming his most winning expression he replied:

"Yes, old man, it will be rather hard on you, I am sure. A few nice women will probably cut you dead. There may even be a few lines in the papers, but it is not likely that it will make a big sensation by any means. But don't take the worst view of it. You can go away for awhile, and eventually it will all blow over."

"Don't! Not the papers—don't say that!" Winton broke in hoarsely, and began to walk rapidly back and forth. "Then you refuse to help me? Is that what I am to understand?"

"I am afraid there is nothing I can do. You see, it doesn't happen to be a case falling within the lines of my professional duty. I could hardly go to Mrs. Winton and ask her to make me the recipient of her confidences concerning her husband's misbehavior, and it is hardly likely that she will come to me for advice."

"But she has such great confidence in you, and——"

"And you would like to have me trade upon that for your benefit?" asked Doctor Lambert witheringly.

Evidently there was a weak spot in the armor, for Winton abruptly paused in his walk and stiffened.

"Oh, if that is the view you care to take of it—if—— But come, Lambert, I sha'n't say what I intended. You can help me if you will, and I know that you will. I am going to the club. I shall stay there until you ring me up if it's a week. Good-by." He was gone before Doctor Lambert could reply.

For half a minute Doctor Lambert sat quite still nursing his resentment against the departed one, then softly breathed,—

"Cur!"

But he could not dismiss the matter from his mind. He should

have been thinking of a dozen other very important things. But—it may have been the weather, he decided it must be that—he was very much on edge.

"Poor little girl!" he murmured; and again, "Poor little girl!"

Although he had said to Winton that he would be laying himself liable to rebuke should he broach so delicate a subject to the lady in question, he knew well enough that such was not the case. And had the man known his wife as well as he should, he would have known it too,—would have known that the hand which had guided the runting mouth of his baby to its mother's breast was the one upon which she would rely.

But what to do, that was the question. To insure her future happiness it would be necessary to deceive her, and the thought was revolting to him. She was not the sort of a woman to make excuses. Then, even when he had convinced her of her error, her heart would be very tender and she would grieve at the injustice she had done her husband. He could imagine how Winton would patronize her and forgive her for her suspicions.

Till the great, glowing, copper-colored disk of the sun had slowly settled into the notch between the Twin Peaks he thought of it, and heeded not the rising breeze of the evening, which blew his papers all about. He was angry that Winton had come to him with the story, and glad, after all, that he knew it. Suddenly he snapped his watch and unconsciously mused aloud:

"Six o'clock. I am going out there. The great point is that after her suspicions have been allayed she shall not guess that I was aware of them. The only way I can see out of it is to take the blame upon myself. Without doubt the letters are rather silly, but it is fortunate that they have not his name on them."

A half hour later Mrs. Winton met him at her door. If he had ever doubted the propriety of lying, her face convinced him that there were circumstances under which it was justifiable.

She was one of those diminutive women with great, soulful eyes, the kind of woman made to be loved and petted. Her fluffy blond hair and small, perfect form were so suggestive of the doll that one would naturally feel inclined to see whether the eyes would close mechanically, like any other well-regulated doll, should you place it in the proper position; only now the lids were red and swollen.

He must have shown in his greeting an unusual warmth, which he immediately regretted, for had he not frozen a little she would have been telling him the whole story, and he had a dread of scenes, because they played havoc with his sympathies.

"Has Mr. Winton come home yet?" he asked hastily.

"No, he sent word that he would be late," she answered.

"I am glad of that, Mrs. Winton. There was a favor I wanted to ask you, and I didn't— Now, how shall I get at it?" He hesitated with well-simulated embarrassment. "Well, I didn't exactly want your husband to see them, you know, if he has not already."

"See what?" she queried, a little curiously. They were seated facing each other.

"Do you happen to know whether Mr. Winton is wearing the same coat to-day that he had on yesterday?" he asked irrelevantly.

"He certainly is not. I am quite positive of that," she said. "Why do you ask?"

Doctor Lambert gave utterance to a moderate sigh of relief before answering.

"I will tell you. I have two mischievous young nieces who are always writing me silly notes, asking to be taken here and there and every place else. Well,"—he twisted in his chair, as though uncertain how to state the case,—“we were all down at the club last night, Mr. Winton and some others, playing hand-ball, I think it was, and, of course, we had our coats off. I spilled those letters, and thinking it over to-day, I am almost certain that I put them in Mr. Winton's pocket instead of my own. His was the only coat that looked like mine. Chances are he will read them, and the laugh will be on me; no one will believe— There, even you are laughing, Mrs. Winton."

Yes, she was laughing, immoderately, hysterically, with more than half a cry in it,—such a laugh as made Doctor Lambert's heart ache,—but he affected not to see that part of it and continued:

"If I remember aright, there were no envelopes on them, and— would it be too much trouble for you to see, Mrs. Winton?"

She had stopped laughing now and made one or two little, gaspy attempts to speak, then dabbed her handkerchief to her eyes. Doctor Lambert held his breath, anxiously waiting to see whether she would rise to the occasion, or whether she would be weak enough to tell him all the little things she had thought. Her pride won. The light of love and confidence swept over her face in a great wave, and she laughed again—a merry, care-free laugh.

"How unusual," she said. "Why, certainly, I will see this minute. If they are there, you shall have them, and Mr. Winton shall be deprived the opportunity of laughing at you about them, for I will never tell. But," she raised her finger and shook it at him archly, "are you quite certain they are from your mischievous nieces, Doctor Lambert?"

You may imagine the rest of this story; it isn't worth the telling. At another time there will appear the narrative of how Doctor Lambert made Charlie Winton pay dearly for his duplicity.

THE BLADE THAT WON

A TALE OF THE MIDI

BY

BURTON EGBERT STEVENSON

AUTHOR OF

"AT ODDS WITH THE REGENT," ETC.



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